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**Stories of hope: Towards a systems reconceptualisation of hope
theory**

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(Education)

ABSTRACT

Hope is a crucial concept to explore to prepare our youth for a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world. It is a strong protective and enabling factor for emerging adults, specifically in the context of university studies. However, there remain several unanswered questions about the mechanisms that facilitate these adaptive relationships. Additionally, there are limitations evident in the translation of the dominant psychological theory of hope to facilitate hope in young adults. This thesis aims to address these gaps, storying the journey towards a reconceptualised systems theory of hope. To progress this endeavour, the thesis aimed to: 1) examine the development of Snyder's (1989) Hope Theory and ensuing methods of study to ascertain potential gaps in the theoretical construction and 2) compare lay to scientific theories of hope to explore both support and opportunities for refinement of the central tenets of these theories.

Four investigations were conducted to address these aims. Firstly, a critically appraised topic (CAT) review of Snyder's (1989) Hope Theory revealed meta-theoretical, theoretical and methodological limitations that have constrained our ability to assess the dynamic interactions between factors that enable hope. The second investigation introduced a storying methodology, Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI), to address these limitations, demonstrating how this approach can facilitate the co-production of new knowledge with participants to help refine contextually relevant theories. This investigation was the first critical analysis of the PNI methodology in the academic literature.

The PNI approach was tested in a multi-phased qualitative study that engaged university students as co-researchers to explore their experiences and lay theories of

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how hope emerges. Findings contributed empirical support for some of the central tenets of different theories of hope but also identified missing elements central to students' experiences of hope. These findings provided support for an expanded theoretical framework that encompasses factors across the self as a system and within systems that are crucial to enabling the experience of hope in these students. The final investigation proposed an initial model that integrates these findings in an expanded dynamic systems theory of hope.

This program of research contributes a new meta-theoretical systems conceptualisation of hope, providing both theoretical and empirical evidence for the addition of new mechanisms that enable hope to emerge in university students. It further contributes new knowledge on a methodological approach that enables participatory exploration of complex wellbeing experiences, facilitating a more democratised pathway to theoretical construction. These contributions have practical implications that can enable the design of more effective tailored strategies to facilitate hope in emerging adults and fuel the next wave of discovery in hope research.

Keywords: hope theory, storying, complex systems dynamics, participatory research, emerging adults

DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

1. The thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy, except where indicated in the preface.
2. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
3. The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words limit in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, and appendices.

Rachel Colla

Date: 5/11/2023

PREFACE

This preface outlines the publications prepared by the author as part of this dissertation, indicating the nature and proportion of the collaboration of others. This includes manuscripts (published, under review, and submitted) that have been co-authored, outlining the specific contributions of each party. Notably, the doctoral candidate is the first author of each of these outputs and undertook the majority of work for these publications. It also specifies the publications and conference papers that were presented during the candidature that have informed the development of this thesis.

No work that has been submitted as part of this thesis was prepared prior to the candidature nor submitted for other qualifications. No third-party editorial assistance was provided in the preparation of this thesis, except for the use of Grammarly Inc to check grammar, spelling and consistency of word choice. This program of work was supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) fee-offset scholarship, but no other grants, scholarships, or funding was used in the preparation of this thesis.

Chapter 3 (Published Article)

The manuscript was accepted for publication with only minor editing modifications in *Frontiers in Psychology* on 17/1/2022.

Colla, R.H., Williams, P., Oades, L.G., & Camacho-Morles, J. (2022). 'A new hope' for positive psychology: A dynamic systems reconceptualization of hope theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.809053.

| Author | Nature of contribution | Contribution % |
|----------------------|---|----------------|
| Rachel Colla | Research idea and design Development of research questions Development of search protocols and systematic review of databases Data extraction and coding Manuscript preparation Editing, refining and submitting paper | 78% |
| Paige Williams | As a supervisor, provided general advice throughout the development of this manuscript, providing contextual insights that helped shape arguments and feedback for editing the manuscript | 10% |
| Lindsay Oades | As a supervisor, provided general advice throughout the development of this manuscript, providing contextual insights that helped shape arguments | 7% |
| Jesus Camacho Morles | Coded studies by discipline and performed the constellation mapping analysis for Figure A2 | 5% |

Chapter 4 (Published Article)

This manuscript was accepted for publication on 2/1/2024 in the International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology. The original manuscript was peer-reviewed with recommendations to clarify further the advantages that PNI offers over existing methodologies to investigate complex wellbeing constructs. Additionally, the reviewers provided valuable feedback to include a worked example of a project that would more explicitly demonstrate the analytical methods and philosophical underpinnings of the methodology. The reviewers also suggested being more explicit about the ethical considerations in the use of PNI. These recommendations have been included in the version of the manuscript included in this thesis.

Colla, R.H., & Kurtz, C.F. (2024). Storying research: Exploring the benefits of

Participatory Narrative Inquiry for wellbeing research. *International Journal of*

Applied Positive Psychology, [DOI: 10.1007/s41042-024-00147-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s41042-024-00147-4).

| Author | Nature of contribution | Contribution % |
|---------------|--|-----------------------|
| Rachel Colla | Research idea and design Development of search protocols and review of databases Literature analysis Manuscript preparation Editing, refining and submitting paper | 80% |
| Cynthia Kurtz | Wrote overview of the context of PNI development Provided feedback to help shape arguments in PNI sections Developed Figure B3 Provided feedback for editing manuscript | 20% |

Chapter 6 (Submitted Article)

This manuscript was submitted for publication to *Qualitative Psychology* on 7/11/2023.

Colla, R.H., Oades, L.G., & Williams, P. Stories of hope: A participatory narrative inquiry into integrated theories of hope for young adults. Submitted for review in *Qualitative Psychology*.

| Author | Nature of contribution | Contribution % |
|----------------|---|-----------------------|
| Rachel Colla | Research idea and design Development of research questions Literature review Ethics application Recruitment of participants Data collection Data analysis Manuscript preparation Editing, refining and submitting paper | 90% |
| Lindsay Oades | As a supervisor, provided general advice throughout the development of this research, providing contextual insights that helped shape arguments. Provided feedback for editing the manuscript. | 5% |
| Paige Williams | As a supervisor, provided general advice throughout the development of this research, providing contextual | 5% |

insights that helped shape arguments.
Provided feedback for editing the
manuscript

Works Published During Candidature Not Included in Thesis

The following publications were written and published during candidature and reflect the application of this thesis. These publications helped shape the Discussion section (Chapter 8) but are not included in the thesis.

Colla, R.H., & Mossman, L.H. (2023). Wellbeing integrated learning design: A multi-layered approach to facilitating wellbeing education through learning design and educational practice. *Frontiers in Education, 8*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1216658>.

Colla, R., Gowing, A., Molloy-Murphy, A., Ryan, T. (2023). Designing education for wellbeing and connection in a COVID impacted world. In K. Coleman, D. Uzhegova, B. Blaher, & S. Arkoudis (Eds.), *Rethinking the educational turn: Where to post 2020*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-8951-3_4

Colla, R.H. (2022). Be hopeful. In C. van Nieuwerburgh & P. Williams (Eds.). *From surviving to thriving: A student's guide to feeling and doing well at university* (pp. 31-42). Sage Publishing.

Conference Presentations Related to This Thesis

I am humbled to have been an invited speaker both domestically and internationally based on this work, which helped refine my ideas presented in this thesis. This included being invited to present as an ambassador for the Maroondah Communities of Wellbeing Hope Centre, and as an invited keynote at a principals' conference for the Department of Education in Victoria. I was also invited as a keynote

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for the International Schools of Sion conference and invited to give a guest lecture on this work at the University of Edmonton in Canada.

I have also had the opportunity to present this work at domestic and international academic conferences throughout my candidature to test and refine my ideas. This has included intentionally presenting this work to different audiences, including systems science, storytelling, educational researcher conferences, as well as positive psychology. A list of these presentations is detailed below:

Colla, R. (2023). *Stories of hope: Exploring interdisciplinary storying methods for data collection and analysis* [Paper presentation]. University of Suffolk Storytelling Conference, Suffolk, UK.

Colla, R. (2022). *Hope in our words: A participatory narrative inquiry into how hope emerges for students in higher education* [Paper presentation]. Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference, Adelaide, SA, Australia.

Colla, R. (2020). *Hope in a VUCA world: Taking a systems informed approach to building hope for the future* [Symposium presentation]. 10th European Conference on Positive Psychology, Reykjavík, Iceland. (Deferred due to COVID).

Colla, R. (2020). *Hope.....in our words: A prototype analysis of Australian adolescent conceptualisations of hope* [Paper presentation]. 10th European Conference on Positive Psychology, Reykjavík, Iceland. (Deferred due to COVID).

Colla, R. (2019). *Hope Labs: Taking a systems approach to adolescent thriving* [Poster presentation]. International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) 6th World Congress, Melbourne, VIC, Australia.

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Colla, R. (2019). *Systems informed positive psychology: Practices that fuse systems and wellbeing science* [Workshop Presentation]. 63rd Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Systems Sciences (ISSS), Corvallis, OR, USA.

Colla, R. (2018, July). *Hope Labs: Infusing positive psychology and systems science in secondary curriculum* [Symposium presentation]. 9th European Conference on Positive Psychology, Budapest, Hungary. (Delivered in absentia by my supervisor)

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I wish to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of my three student co-researchers, Thao Ha, Jacob Vernon, and Ching Ee Ang, who were instrumental in the empirical work of this thesis. It was a privilege to work with you in our participatory research, and I am deeply grateful for your generous and insightful contributions. I extend that gratitude to all the students who participated in this research in some extraordinary times. My thanks also to Jen Henderson, who played an important role in supporting these participatory workshops.

I feel incredibly fortunate to get to work with an incredible group of scholars and educators at the Centre for Wellbeing Science. I extend my gratitude to the whole team who have been so supportive and encouraging of me and this work, including playing with this themselves and providing invaluable feedback! I need to particularly thank two individuals who were instrumental in helping me to get to the finish line of this thesis. Firstly, to Professor Dianne Vella Brodrick, who mentored me through some

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of the more challenging times in my thesis, and secondly, to Dr Lara Mossman for her invaluable support, helping me to stay grounded in the bigger picture of this work.

A very special thank you goes to my family. I am grateful to my parents, who raised me to dream big and be willing to work hard to realise those dreams – especially in making a meaningful contribution. To my sister, Angela, for her unwavering support, for believing in me when I struggled to do that myself, and for knowing when to give me a necessary reality check – thank you for being ‘my person’! Finally, it is difficult to put into words how grateful I am to my husband, Andrew, and our four daughters, Mikaila, Jasmine, Isabella and Gabrielle. They are woven into the very fabric of this thesis, they are my *raison d'être* and the inspiration behind this work. But most importantly, I am indebted for their generosity, unwavering love and gracious support that has enabled me to complete this work. I dedicate this thesis to them.

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Note: There are three publications in which these figures are included, which required a separate numbering system. These are identified as articles A, B, and C.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THESIS

1.1. A story of hope

Stories are the currency of life; they are how we make sense of the world and share key life messages. Importantly, this practice of storytelling is ubiquitous across cultures and time (Gottschall, 2012). From oral traditions and cave art, to the movies that move us to tears, and even in social media, stories have been used as a powerful means to teach social norms, develop empathy and foster social cooperation (Smith et al., 2017). So, what is the current story being told about our young people today?

Both the media and a growing body of evidence paint a concerning narrative, particularly as adolescents transition from secondary school into the university context (see Orygen (2017) for an overview). This transition represents a key developmental stage, now occurring in an environment characterised by complexity and uncertainty. Indeed, much of the discourse focuses on the deficits and challenges our youth face; however, we may have missed an important subplot in this critical story that provides an opportunity to unlock the motivating energy of hope. This thesis seeks to explore this story further through a series of chapters that build a case for the need to reconceptualise our theoretical and methodological approaches to studying hope in young people.

The motivating energy of hope is also a subplot woven throughout the story of the evolution of this research program. In the spirit of Joseph Campbell's (1949) monomyth of the hero's journey, this thesis tells a story of purpose, perseverance, the importance of social support, letting go, and ultimately transformation. Its origin begins in BC (before Covid) with a clear goal to expand the dominant psychological theory of hope, particularly as it relates to young adults, igniting a sense of purpose

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and specific pathways to contribute to the literature. However, the challenges and obstacles that emerged as I grappled with a program of research that could no longer be delivered in a global pandemic required me to draw upon a substantial amount of willpower to navigate alternative routes. The original ethics-approved plan included three empirical studies: a mixed-methods prototype analysis of how students conceptualise hope, a narrative inquiry study to explore students' experience of hope, followed by an in-depth qualitative study using focus groups to explore the interrelationships between factors that enable hope to emerge. Recruitment was completed for Study 1, and I was scheduled to collect data on March 23, 2020...I think we all know how this chapter of the story ended!

Living in the most locked-down city in the world (Macreadie, 2022) meant that a predominantly empirical research program was no longer a viable option, as our education systems suspended all approved research indefinitely. Back to the drawing board I went, looking at different ways that I could hold the core purpose of my inquiry at heart while redesigning pandemic-resilient methods to fulfil this program of research. My first decision was to shift my focus to deepen my theoretical contribution by publishing a critical review of the literature on the development of the dominant psychological theory of hope (Snyder, 1989). This pivot allowed me to continue progressing my thesis while I was unable to collect any empirical data, developing a theoretical base for an expanded model of hope theory.

At the same time, I was involved in a global community of practitioners and researchers integrating systems science and wellbeing in education. Through this community, I was introduced to a methodology known as Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) and its leading researcher, Cynthia Kurtz. As I researched the

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methodology, I was excited to discern that it was an even better fit for my research aims than the original plan, particularly in bringing in student voice as part of this research program. Redesigning my empirical work using PNI allowed me to use an interdisciplinary method that addressed the epistemological and methodological limitations identified in my critical review of the literature. Importantly, as a methodology steeped in a participatory action research paradigm, this would not only enable a theoretical and empirical contribution but also provide insights into how we refine practice.

Armed with a new sense of hopeful energy, I began recruitment in 2021 for the newly approved research program. Unfortunately, the ongoing impact of the pandemic continued to impact the empirical work, as Melbourne headed into multiple waves of lockdown throughout 2021. While the study was redesigned to be entirely online, the stress levels that our international and domestic students reported led to significant challenges in participant recruitment. In consultation with my supervisors, I decided to pause the empirical work and make another shift in my thesis design.

As part of my research into the PNI methodology, I identified no analyses of the methodology in the academic literature. I decided to address this gap as part of my thesis, facilitating a methodological contribution of a new way to research complex dynamic wellbeing constructs like hope. After developing the initial draft of my article, I reached out to the developer of the methodology to ask if she would be willing to collaborate in this endeavour. Our debates expanded my thinking around research philosophy and how to coherently integrate multi-methods and different ways of knowing into a cohesive methodological approach. The relational interactions with Cynthia and my two supervisors opened doorways to a deeper and more meaningful

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redesign of my thesis from a predominantly theoretical and empirical contribution to a more holistic contribution that includes meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions.

Hope allowed me to push through and motivated me to find an alternative story that may be richer than the original plot. This was an emergent (and often uncomfortable!) experience that became greater than the original linear plan, not realised by a lack of control (that always was and always will be) over the circumstances and environment in which research is conducted. Instead, by embracing this, I allowed something more to surface than what was initially envisioned. This chapter outlines the story that ultimately unfolded, the beginnings of a journey towards a dynamic systems reconceptualisation of hope theory.

1.2. Research aims

This thesis aims to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges for young people. Understanding the interactions between important factors that support resilience and adaptive functioning, particularly in a post-pandemic climate, is fundamental to enhancing the student experience at university and supporting our young people to realise their potential. This thesis aims to expand the current meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological approaches underpinning the hope research in psychology to achieve this goal. In doing so, this thesis seeks to address the limitations in the existing approaches, by taking a dynamic systems lens to this investigation. There is also a growing call to incorporate young adults' perspectives, as lay conceptualisation research has demonstrated the theoretical models that we draw upon to support and increase aspects of their wellbeing miss relevant nuances (Colla et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2022). This research addresses this by positioning students as

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experts in explaining their experiences and the factors enabling hope for them.

Students were also invited to co-design how insights from this project could be shared with the broader community to enhance future research and practice. This thesis addresses these aims through four core investigations designed to:

- examine the development of the dominant theory of hope in the psychological literature, identifying potential meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological gaps;
- investigate research methodologies that can enable a complex dynamic systems approach that addresses the current meta-theoretical and methodological limitations in hope and wellbeing research more broadly;
- evaluate how hope emerges for young adults in university, identifying support for the existing theory of hope and opportunities to refine the model further;
- create a reconceptualised theoretical model of hope that expands beyond the current individual cognitive boundaries to a more dynamic systems approach.

1.3. Overview of Thesis

The thesis begins by outlining the background and rationale for the program of research in Chapter Two. This chapter argues for the significance of hope as a fundamental resource to develop in emerging adulthood, particularly in the context of university studies. An analysis of the various theories of hope in the psychological literature is detailed, including the limited efficacy of interventions based on these

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theories, creating a justification to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges. The chapter concludes with an argument to expand our meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological lens to a more interdisciplinary perspective of hope and the plan to achieve that in this dissertation.

Chapter Three is a published critical review of the dominant psychological theory of hope (in *Frontiers of Psychology*). This article systematically analyses the literature on the development of Snyder et al. (1991) Hope Theory and the methods the body of research is founded upon. The analysis moves from a broad examination of the research landscape of Hope Theory across disciplines to a deeper investigation of the empirical literature in university students. This work provided the theoretical basis for a dynamic systems reconceptualisation of the theory, including evidence for two additional factors. The findings highlighted meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological limitations. Arguments for broadening our research approaches to address these limitations are recommended.

Chapter Four takes up this call to broaden our research approaches, developing a rationale for using storying methodologies to address the current limitations in the extant psychological literature. This chapter is an article currently under peer-review (in *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*). It outlines the benefits of using stories as method/ology to explore complex wellbeing constructs like hope. Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) is introduced as an example of a storying methodology that has not been used in the hope literature to date. This article is co-authored with the developer of the methodology and provides an overview of the essential and supplementary methods used within each phase of PNI. A critical analysis

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of the theoretical and empirical basis for this approach is provided, demonstrating how PNI can support the development of contextually relevant theories and practices.

Having established the need to explore the central tenets of hope theory further and argued for a new methodology to enable a dynamic systems investigation, Chapter Five builds the rationale for the empirical work to contribute to this aim. The chapter begins by exploring the underlying assumptions of the research design and reasoning for the methodology selected for this inquiry. Data collection and interpretation methods are explored, arguing the case for their selection to address the four research questions. This chapter provides arguments to support an interdisciplinary multi-method approach to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges for young people. Finally, a summary of the study design is outlined, explaining how it was intended to advance this thesis's central aims and research questions.

Chapter Six is a manuscript of an article that has been submitted to *Qualitative Psychology*. This study was designed to address the gap identified in Chapter Three of a lack of empirical evidence for some of the central tenets of hope theory, taking a grounded approach to understanding how hope emerges in university students. The investigation was a multi-phased qualitative study that also sought to address the second aim of this thesis: to incorporate youth voices into our research inquiries, testing the efficacy of the PNI methodology to achieve this aim. The article argues for the importance of discerning lay definitions and theories of concepts used in everyday language, such as hope, including how these can be used to refine scientific theories that inform practice.

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The findings from Study 1a provide insights into the language students use to describe the abstract concept of hope and the themes represented in their conceptualisations. These themes are compared to the academic literature, outlining support for Snyder's hope theory and identifying notable departures from his conceptualisation. Studies 1b to 1d are conducted using PNI with three student co-researchers through a series of participatory sense-making workshops exploring students' stories of the experience of hope. The findings provided evidence for additional elements beyond Snyder's two-factor theory of hope. Across the three studies, the analyses highlighted the need to expand beyond the current individualistic cognitive theory of hope to a more systems understanding of the self as a system and within systems. Finally, the findings revealed a more idiographic understanding of how elements interact to enable hope to emerge, emphasising the need for a reconceptualisation of our theoretical model.

Chapter Seven synthesises the findings across this dissertation to propose a conceptual theoretical model that expands and reconceptualises hope theory through a dynamic systems lens. Taking a consilient approach that weaves together theoretical support for the approach, together with evidence from the empirical work of this thesis, this model provides a first step towards a new model of hope theory. Recommendations for further testing and refining of this model are proposed.

Finally, Chapter Eight draws together the key findings from this research program. The strengths and limitations of the approach are analysed, including implications for research and practice. This chapter highlights this dissertation's meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions and provides recommendations for future directions in hope research.

1.4. Summary of thesis contribution

This thesis contributes new knowledge, both theoretical and empirical, to our understanding of how hope emerges in young adults. A new theory of hope is provided, reconceptualising the experience through a dynamic systems lens, including adding additional factors based on the theoretical and empirical findings of this thesis. This contribution broadens our meta-theoretical approach to the study of hope to date. This dissertation also introduces a new methodology in the hope literature, contributing to our understanding of how this approach can help refine contextually relevant theories for complex constructs by partnering with the communities we seek to serve in the process of knowledge development.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

This chapter introduces the background and rationale for this research project. I begin with a story that led to the initiation of this thesis. This sets the scene for the background to this thesis, introducing the core concept, hope, and its relevance to the target cohort, emerging adults in the context of their university studies. I then outline the landscape of the various theories within the psychological literature featuring the dominant theory over the last 30 years. The review of this literature highlights some of the gaps that emerge from a single epistemological perspective. To complement this perspective, I provide a brief overview of some multidisciplinary theories, arguing for the benefits of integrating some of these disparate approaches. The need for a more integrated systems approach to understanding hope is presented as the core focus of this research program.

2.1. Igniting the fire

The story of this thesis begins well before my initial proposal was accepted and I embarked on my PhD program at the beginning of 2018. I like to think its origins began when I was first introduced to the science of hope in 2015, but perhaps the story extends back to my time as a university student, my own period of emerging adulthood. When I first learned about Snyder's (1989) Hope Theory, I had one of those 'aha moments'. Finally, I had found language that helped explain my own experience. More importantly, I saw Hope Theory in the ripples reflected across my career, with the many students I had worked with as a psychologist in the education sector and the leaders I had coached in organisational contexts.

The simple elegance of this theory resonated as I realised the resourcefulness that had enabled me to navigate the challenges of so many points in my life was not

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because I was a ‘glass half-full kind of person’ (the explanation that so many had given me throughout my life) but rather that I was hopeful. Hope has been defined as “a positive motivational state that is based on the interactively derived sense of a) agency (goal-directed energy), and b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 287). Through the opportunities afforded me throughout my life, I was endowed with the ability to envision a future I cared about, trust in my abilities to persist in the face of challenges, and the capacity to find pathways to bring that future to reality. It was this final component, what Snyder colloquially referred to as WayPower, and one of the key aspects that differentiates hope from its close cousin optimism (Feldman & Kubota, 2015; Snyder, 2002), that I identified as being the super-power of hope for me and so many of my clients. That is the power of a good theory: it provides us with accessible language that both explains an experience and identifies key components we can develop.

The utility of this theory is explored in the empirical literature review in the next chapter. However, the strength of the ecological validity of this theory made it particularly useful in my role consulting schools about how they could create the conditions for their community to thrive, as well as in my teaching and mentoring of undergraduate students at a top-tier university. Education is an ideal setting to facilitate the development of hope, as will be explored further in this chapter. I had been applying Hope Theory directly into my teaching and coaching and had also developed a Hope Labs curriculum, designed to address the notable lack of hope that was evident in secondary students across Australia (Gallup, 2021). However, in my research for this project, I was surprised to discover that the efficacy of many hope interventions demonstrated only small effect sizes.

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The more I investigated the literature, the more I began to identify potential gaps in the theory and how it was translated into practice. As we will explore further in this chapter, there are substantial differences in how hope has been theorised in psychology and across related disciplines over the last 50 years. Hope is also part of a nomological network of associated constructs, with varying explanations of how these constructs intersect or overlap with hope (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002; Wilson et al., 2021). One of my initial hypotheses was that the separation of constructs and contrasting theoretical hypotheses about the mechanisms that lead to hope may have accounted for the small effect sizes of the interventions. I began exploring the broader literature and postulated that taking a more integrated dynamic resource model of hope could enable the design of more holistic interventions to support positive youth development. This idea became the central focus of my thesis, and this chapter outlines the rationale and background for the program of research that I embarked upon, building the groundwork for the story that is to unfold.

2.2. Setting the scene: The university context for emerging adults

University is a time of exploration and development towards the future for emerging adults (Arnett, 2015a). Emerging adulthood is a term that was coined by Jeffrey Arnett (2000) to reflect the developmental period between adolescence and adulthood, typically those aged 18-25. This phase is characterised by five defining features: *identity exploration*, where young people search for a sense of purpose in their work and relationships; *instability*, referring to the frequent changes in employment, residences and relationships that occur more than other times in one's life; *possibilities*, which reflects the many options that young adults see before them; *self-focus*, identifying the relative lack of responsibilities that allows them to pay more

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attention to their own life; and *feeling-in-between* indicating the sense of transition as they are not yet adults and yet more mature than adolescents (Arnett, 2015b).

While the university context provides a fertile environment to explore some developmental tasks characteristic of this age group (Arnett & Schwab, 2012), the world in which our young people are developing their sense of identity and place is characterised by significant uncertainty and challenge. These students are facing unprecedented concerns about the sustainability of life on our planet, resulting in the rise of concerns about eco-anxiety and eco-grief (Ágoston et al., 2022). The rapid rate of technological advances and the changing nature of the workforce means that students are studying in unprecedented precarity (Bessant et al., 2017), including perceptions of economic uncertainty and a highly competitive labour force (Walsh & Black, 2021). As the last few years have demonstrated, the impact of a global pandemic and geo-political tensions add further to the volatility and uncertainty experienced by university students (Wu et al., 2022). While these factors do not have a direct causal relationship, perhaps it is unsurprising that a range of studies evidence that university students in Australia are facing mental health challenges at disproportional rates to the general population (Larcombe et al., 2021; Larcombe et al., 2016; Orygen, 2017; Stallman, 2010).

In such a climate, it is crucial that universities prepare students with the requisite capabilities to traverse this uncertainty, developing graduate attributes that are responsive to the needs of a changing environment (Wu et al., 2022). Hope is crucial in such an environment, as it provides motivational energy and impetus to design possible pathways to navigate the future, guiding behavioural responses (Sanchez et al., 2022). Beliefs and expectancies about the future are influential

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predictors of two key goals within the university context: academic achievement and the development of wellbeing capabilities (Bandura, 1977). As will be demonstrated in the literature analysis in Chapter Three, hope acts as both an enabling and protective factor during this critical developmental period for young people. It is associated with a range of wellbeing, learning, and resilience capabilities that can support emerging adults to traverse the uncertainty that they face and support their positive youth development (Bowers & Bowers, 2023; Bronk et al., 2009; Goodman et al., 2017; Marques et al., 2017). There is also evidence to suggest that education settings are an ideal environment to integrate strategies to build hope in emerging adults, given these can be woven into pedagogy within the existing curricula, extra-curricular activities, and in therapeutic and careers counselling (Cheavens & Guter, 2018; Marques & Lopez, 2018).

2.3. The evolution of theories of hope in the psychological literature

Evidence suggests hope is a malleable capability (Ciarrochi et al., 2015). Therefore, exploring the theoretical models that help explain the antecedents or mechanisms through which hope develops is relevant. Throughout the history of psychology, the interest in studying hope has waxed and waned, which can be partially explained by shifts in epistemological and socio-cultural influences that accelerate or impede research (Scioli, 2020). While a full review of the evolution of theories is beyond the scope of this chapter (see Callina et al., 2018, or Scioli, 2020, for a more comprehensive review), it is relevant to explore the recent wave of contemporary theories, given their influence on the empirical study of hope in psychology.

Before reviewing these theoretical developments, it is pertinent to highlight that the purpose or way theories are used is discipline-specific, with Iser (2006)

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distinguishing between humanistic and scientific theories. He argues that the former is used to understand a particular phenomenon, often using functional metaphors to represent the construct, while the purpose of the latter leans more towards enabling predictions, and thus focuses on the development of specific laws. Most humanistic theories are typically derived from inductive inference, a bottom-up approach that integrates data into a coherent model that fosters understanding (Syed, 2016). By comparison, most scientific theories are derived through deductive inference, using top-down methods to test propositions (Syed, 2016). These distinctions are reflected in the theories that are reviewed in this section.

The rise of a positivist epistemology in psychology, which prioritised laboratory-based observations, has been used to explain the relative lack of scholarship on hope in the early 20th century (Scioli, 2020), while the recent wave of development of theoretical models can be traced back to the influence of Karl Menninger who created a stirring ‘call to arms’ in his address lamenting the lack of study of the concept. He argued, “We are duty bound to speak up as scientists - not about a new bomb, but about the ancient but rediscovered truth, the validity of hope in human development” (Menninger, 1960, p. 11). Menninger’s background as a psychiatrist led to an early focus on hope’s protective nature in mitigating illbeing. However, this was soon complemented by Erik Erikson’s work, locating the importance of hope in the developmental psychology literature. As each theorist brought their own socio-cultural and discipline focus to the development of hope theories, we saw varying elements represented. These are summarised in Table 1 below, including the inductive or deductive approach taken to their development.

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Table 1

Summation of Theoretical Elements and Approach for Contemporary Theories of Hope

| Theorist | Positive future expectancy | Goal-oriented | Probability of success | Attachment/interpersonal | Agency | Pathways planning | Spirituality / moral expectation | Survival or Strength | Cognitive | Affective | Inductive | Deductive |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Erikson (1964) | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Stotland (1969) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Staats & Stassen (1985) | ✓ | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Snyder (1989) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Averill et al. (1990) | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Bernardo (2010) | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Scioli et al. (2011) | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Herth (1991) | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |

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Erikson (1964) conceptualised hope as integral to healthy human development. Informed by his field observations but predominantly deductively derived, his psychosocial theory is grounded in the evolutionary nature of human development. He theorised that hope emerges through encoding early interactions with caregivers that enable a sense of trust, empowering the individual to explore their environment securely. The hopeful child develops a sense of 'reality surveillance', examining what can or cannot be changed in their environment, allowing them to modify their goals accordingly. He also theorised that hope was the foundation for other related developmental strengths, including a sense of purpose, will, and competence.

Ezra Stotland (1969) integrated findings from experimental and clinical literature to define hope as a product that emerges when considering the probability of achieving a personally meaningful goal. His cognitive-expectancy model proposed seven propositions that reflect the individuals' selective attunement and responses to their environment, creating motivation to act. He argued positive affect is elicited from the individual's perception of a greater probability of success of an important goal, thus considering affective processes as secondary to the cognitive. By comparison, Staats and Stassen (1985) conceptualised hope as an affective experience, defined in an input-output model of the sum of expected positive feelings, less negative ones. They proposed that hope emerges from the interaction between cognitions (expectation of a future event) and affect (desirability and positive affective response). They explicitly stated that they were not concerned with the primacy of cognitive vs affective, instead describing a more dynamic model. However, their model was predominantly developed for measurement rather than a theoretical explanation of the experience.

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Some have argued that the theory that has dominated the psychological literature over the last 30 years, Snyder's Hope Theory, was also developed for the purpose of measurement (Scioli, 2020). Indeed, when Snyder (1989) first introduced the core theoretical propositions of his theory, he provided initial data from developing a hope scale to support his two-factor model that would ultimately be validated in the seminal paper articulating the 'will and ways' of hope (Snyder et al., 1991). Across his early writings, however, Snyder provided coherent theoretical arguments for the learning processes that lead to the development of two types of cognitive processes, agency and pathways thinking; articulating feed-forward and feedback loops that work in an iterative and reciprocal relationship to enable the experience hope (Snyder, 1989, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991). However, the way the theory has been operationalised, and thus predominantly represented in the literature, is more reflective of a two-factor additive model.

Hope Theory is grounded in the goal literature and operationalises hope as a dynamic motivational system that provides individuals with the cognitive tools and determination to strive towards goals (Snyder, 2002). While Snyder's ideas were seeded from his observations of participants in his reality negotiation studies, he has predominantly taken a deductive approach to theory development, influenced by his evaluation of the motivational literature and the cognitive revolution that occurred during this period (Snyder, 2002). Snyder's theory revitalised a substantial body of research that would demonstrate how hope allows individuals to optimise resources in their environment, supporting their adaptive development (Schmid & Lopez, 2011), as will be explored in the next chapter. For this reason, Snyder's Hope Theory will be the primary focus of this thesis.

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Around the same time Snyder's theory was developed, Averill and colleagues (1990) took an alternative approach, deriving specific laws of hope based on their analysis of 108 metaphors of hope. Their analysis was predominantly descriptive, identifying hope as a source of light, a sense of vitality, a physical object, a form of support, or a deception or pressure. While they considered hope a universal experience, they recognised how it was conceptualised was culturally normative. Thus, the processes through which it is elicited may vary across different populations. Hope in their model is conceptualised as an emotional state that affects thoughts and motivates behaviour.

Bernardo (2010) also raised concerns about the suggestion of universally normative theories of hope, arguing that in collectivist cultures a conjoint model of agency is more prevalent than the disjoint models of agency indicative of individualist cultures. He proposed an expansion to Snyder's theory, adding an internal-external locus of hope that suggested that the foci of goals, agency and pathways thinking could be contextualised along a spectrum involving internal to external agents (Bernardo, 2010, 2014; Bernardo et al., 2016). This addition made some headway in addressing one of the most persistent criticisms of Snyder's model: its lack of consideration of the interpersonal context (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). Like Snyder, Bernardo took a top-down development to this additional proposition and used the development of a measurement tool to validate the structure.

2.4. Insights from further afield

It is evident from the review of the theories above the substantial influence of the theorists' disciplinary background, guiding a conceptualisation of hope as a developmental process (Erikson, 1964), an emotional experience (Averill et al., 1990;

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Staats & Stassen, 1985) or goal-directed suite of cognitive functions (Bernardo, 2010; Snyder, 1989; Stotland, 1969). This pattern reflects the shifting identity of the psychology discipline that shaped the questions asked and theories developed (Van den Besselaar, 2018). Thomas Kuhn (1974), one of the most cited philosophers of science, refers to this as the 'normal phase' of science, exemplified by a growth in the accumulation of knowledge. However, the analysis above also highlights the gaps that arise from a singular epistemological perspective, as the vast majority took a top-down deductive approach reflecting the historical influence in the literature of the time. This precludes the ability to build upon and integrate the varying perspectives in these theories. As a result, we are left with an incomplete picture in each theory, but the potentiality that together they may create a mosaic of understanding.

Scioli et al. (2011) have attempted to address this limitation, developing a theory that integrates insights from multiple disciplines, including psychology, medicine, theology, and philosophy. They defined hope as a "future-directed, four-channel emotion network, constructed from biological, psychological, and social resources. The four constituent channels are the mastery, attachment, survival, and spiritual systems" (Scioli et al., 2011, p. 79). The network consists of five layers, moving from biological motives to the influence of nature and nurture, the development of specific traits (named the hopeful core), and essential elements of faith that give rise to the daily beliefs, feelings and behaviours. It is a complex model that is admirable in its breadth of coverage, but this has also limited its application in the literature. Furthermore, some components are prescriptive, such as their proposition that a personal faith system is necessary for hope.

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A final theory that warrants exploration is one of the most researched models of hope in health alongside Snyder's Hope Theory (Feldman et al., 2022), namely Herth's (1991) model of hope. This model has predominantly been used in a clinical nursing population but offers an integrative approach that complements many of the psychological theories outlined above. Herth's theory was also derived from a more multidisciplinary perspective, drawing on philosophy, psychology, theology, and sociology and informed by nursing practice. The model has two dimensions conceptually similar to Snyder's pathways and agency (affective-behavioural and cognitive-temporal dimensions, respectively). However, it incorporates a third dimension with no corresponding component to Snyder's model. This affiliative-contextual dimension refers to an individual's perception of social and spiritual support and a sense of belongingness (Herth, 1991), creating a more contextual approach to theorising hope. She conceptualises hope as an integrated multi-dimensional theory; however, it has also been operationalised through a process-oriented approach that does not recognise the interrelationships between these dimensions, mirroring the issue of Snyder's operationalisation.

2.5. The need for a new approach

Several scholars have argued for the benefits inherent in integrating disciplinary perspectives to fuel the next phase of growth in knowledge (Scioli, 2023; Van den Besselaar, 2018; Wissing, 2021). This is not about starting anew but rather, as Scioli (2023) argues, it is about integrating the old with the new, a 'back to the future' if you like, to deepen knowledge and address some of the limitations that arise from a monodisciplinary perspective (Wissing, 2021). Numerous questions have been raised in analysing these theoretical models, including the absence of consideration of the

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interpersonal and environmental factors in most models. The impact of how these theories have been operationalised in measurement tools limits the ability to assess the dynamic interactions between elements that enable hope. Perhaps most importantly though, is the lack of inductive reasoning in these theoretical models. Fazey et al. (2020) note that it is insufficient to generate knowledge that is abstract, albeit rational, but also potentially fragmented. Instead, they argue that to propel the next phase of development in a field requires a collaborative, egalitarian approach where we draw on participatory methods with the systems we seek to serve.

Kuhn (1974) suggests questions such as these mark the next phase of development in a field, a 'revolutionary phase', where new assumptions and perspectives are embraced, paving the way for new methods that facilitate the production of new knowledge. My thesis positions the need for this new phase of development as a central focus, arguing for the importance of a more holistic theory of hope that enables the design of effective interventions for young adults. This is particularly important given a meta-analysis of hope interventions derived from Snyder's theoretical model shows only small effect sizes and inconsistent results depending on the setting (Weis & Speridakos, 2011). This is the only meta-analysis in the literature and is now more than a decade old, however, the examination of recent empirical findings in the next chapter reveals a similar pattern.

The gaps highlighted in this chapter justify the need to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges, facilitating potential refinements of theory that can inform practice. To achieve this broad aim, this dissertation will examine the development of Snyder's Hope Theory and the ensuing methods of study to ascertain any potential gaps in the theory. Secondly, I will address the lack of inductive

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reasoning in the development of these theories by comparing lay to scientific theories of hope to explore the evidence for a reconceptualised theory. The next chapter begins this journey with a critical review of the literature on Hope Theory building the case for a new approach.

CHAPTER THREE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF HOPE THEORY

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the hope theory literature. The analysis examines the socio-historical culture that influenced the development of Snyder's Hope Theory and identifies some of the limitations of the meta-theoretical assumptions that underpin the theory. Additional gaps in the construction of the theory are identified, proposing theoretical arguments for the inclusion of two additional factors for consideration. The chapter provides a deeper analysis of the empirical literature examining the antecedents, correlates, and outcomes associated with hope in university students, including the methods of study. I conclude by providing a roadmap for alternative methods of study that can address the limitations identified.

The chapter was accepted for publication in *Frontiers of Psychology* and the author-accepted manuscript has been reproduced below. Please note this paper is written in American English, per the conventions of the journal it is published in, which differs from the rest of this thesis. Additionally, this has been reproduced in its entirety such that the references for this paper are documented in this chapter rather than at the end of the thesis.

'A new hope' for positive psychology: A dynamic systems reconceptualization of hope theory

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Abstract

In this review of the central tenets of hope theory, we examine the meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological foundations of the literature base. Our analysis moves from a broad examination of the research landscape in hope theory across disciplines, to a deeper investigation of the empirical literature in university students. This review highlights the significant impact of this body of research in advancing our understanding of aspects of thriving characterized by hope. However, we also evidence several limitations that may impede the advancement of the next wave of growth in this field. To address these limitations, we argue for an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to expanding the meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological horizons, enabling a more dynamic systems approach to the study of hope. Drawing on the intersection of positive psychology with systems thinking, we describe a methodological approach that enables a deeper examination of the processes and interactions through which hope emerges, using an analysis of the lived experience of young people. It is proposed that this research agenda will bring to life an alternate story about the resourcefulness of our youth through their own voice, enabling us to leverage this in the design of more effective strategies to facilitate hope in the future. This research agenda provides a roadmap that will provide alternative methodologies that address the current limitations in the field of hope research and, importantly, can provide fuel to spur on the acceleration of the next wave of research and practice in the field of positive psychology more broadly.

Keywords: dynamic systems₁, multi-disciplinary₂, methodology₃, hope theory₄, metatheoretical₅

3.1. Introduction

“A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away” With this phrase, George Lucas launched what was to become one of the most successful cinematic epic sagas in recent history. In a thought-provoking choice, Lucas began the series in the middle of a story, launching with the fourth episode, *Star Wars: A New Hope*, for technical and storytelling reasons. The story launches straight into the action while hinting at untold history. In a parallel universe, Rick Snyder launched a theory of hope that has helped drive the significant growth and impact of the field of positive psychology, but there is a sense that there was more to this story. As hope theory enters its third decade of research, the first trilogy, if you like, many storylines have been explored, with the opportunity now for some deeper character development. In this critically appraised topic (CAT) review, we explore the roots of the hope theory story by examining the meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological assumptions that underpin the research. As the story develops, we argue that drawing on multi-disciplinary approaches, such as complex dynamic systems, will help tell some of the ‘untold history’ and thus deepen understanding of the interactions that facilitate aspects of thriving characterized by hope.

Early positive psychology researchers set the tone for significant growth and development of the field, influenced by the desire to provide a systematic and rigorous approach to the scientific study of what enables thriving, or optimal development, across various life domains. As a result, much of the meta-theoretical and methodological development of research and practice has been grounded in a dualist positivist epistemology and realist ontological view of the world as ‘knowable’ (Gergen, 1990). This paradigm sees reality as objectively observable, fixed, and

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generalizable; as such, it transcends context (Ward et al., 2015). However, the unintended consequence of this has led to one of the most persistent criticisms of the field, namely that there is a dominant focus on the individual that lacks an appreciation of contextual and dynamic influences on thriving (Kern et al., 2019).

This limitation is epitomized in Snyder et al.'s (1991) hope theory. While Snyder's conceptualization of hope articulated an iterative and dynamic process between agency (goal-directed energy) and pathway thinking (planning to meet goals), the methods through which it was operationalized and measured produced a more linear and acontextual construct in the empirical literature. We argue that the dynamic tenets of hope theory that have been left on the 'editing floor' with this technical limitation provide valuable insights into the mechanisms that enable the core capabilities to develop. Moreover, the theory is framed in an individualistic cultural perspective and thus may lack applicability to more collectivist cultures. For example, in a conjoint perspective of agency, goals and actions are defined interpersonally rather than individually and often reflect individuals' interdependence and position within social situations (Bernardo, 2010). This is not represented in the current liberal individualist conceptualization of hope theory.

This paper reviews the evolution of research on Snyder's hope theory and the substantial body of evidence linking hope with adaptive functioning. The review reveals several unanswered questions around the mechanisms that facilitate these links that have not been resolved through current methodological approaches. With a meta-analysis demonstrating only small effect sizes, particularly across different contexts (Weis & Speridakos, 2011), the effectiveness of the translation of this body of research to practice can also be questioned. These limitations suggest the need for a

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deepened understanding of how hope emerges; one that recognizes and addresses the inherent complexities in the emergence of hope and is grounded in the lived experience of different sociocultural contexts.

Scholars have recently recognized the need to expand positive psychology towards more complex understandings of the factors and contexts influencing wellbeing. For example, Kern et al.'s (2019) proposal of systems informed positive psychology (SIPP) and Lomas et al.'s (2020) illumination of the dynamics that can broaden the field towards complexity. In this paper, we take up this call for a broadened perspective to one area of positive psychology – hope theory – and in doing so, provide 'a new hope' for how these aspirations can be translated into research practice.

3.1.1. Our Research Agenda

The research agenda we propose aims to address some of these limitations by taking an integrated multi-disciplinary perspective to enable a dynamic systems approach to the study of hope, expanding the current meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological approaches that have underpinned the research to date. The model we propose expands Snyder's conceptualization to incorporate an additional interpersonal factor (*WePower*) and intrapersonal factor (*WhyPower*), in addition to existing elements of hope theory, motivation to succeed (*WillPower*), and planning to meet goals (*WayPower*). The interplay between these factors is a crucial focus of this research agenda, enabling a more dynamic systems model of hope to be developed. In the expanded model we propose, hope is conceptualized as an emergent property that cannot be fully understood by breaking the construct down into its constituent parts; instead, it is an energy system derived from the dynamic interplay between the parts.

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A systems approach argues that more profound knowledge and meaningful understanding come from constructing whole pictures and examining the interrelatedness of factors rather than examining factors in isolation (Flood, 2010). Therefore, drawing from the intersection of positive psychology with complex systems dynamics, we describe a methodological approach that enables a deeper examination of the processes and interactions that facilitate hope to emerge through an analysis of the lived experience of young people. This mixed-methods approach addresses the call for more qualitative research in exploring optimal functioning, proposed by Hefferon et al. (2017), without compromising the systematic rigor aspirations of the founding scholars of positive psychology.

It is proposed that this research agenda will bring to life an as yet untold story about the resourcefulness of our youth through their own voice, enabling us to leverage this in the design of more effective strategies to facilitate hope in the future. Our purpose is to offer a roadmap that will provide alternative methodologies to address the current limitations in hope research and offer insights that can enhance research and practice in positive psychology more broadly.

3.2. Hope rising: An analysis of the development of hope theory

Hope has captured the attention of philosophers, poets, artists, and scholars throughout the ages. In the late 20th Century, numerous social scientists turned their attention to operationalizing hope, with more than 26 theories or definitions generated (Lopez et al., 2003). There is consistency in the core themes underpinning these different theories, namely that hope is a human strength that enables individuals to draw on resources in their environment to support pathways towards healthy development and achievement. The vast majority of these theories operationally

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defined hope as a unidimensional construct grounded in a positive expectation that goals can be met (see Callina et al., 2018 for a review of the history of conceptualizations of hope). However, Snyder et al.'s (1991) two-factor model of hope has dominated the psychological literature over the last 30 years and is one of the key theories underpinning the development of positive psychology.

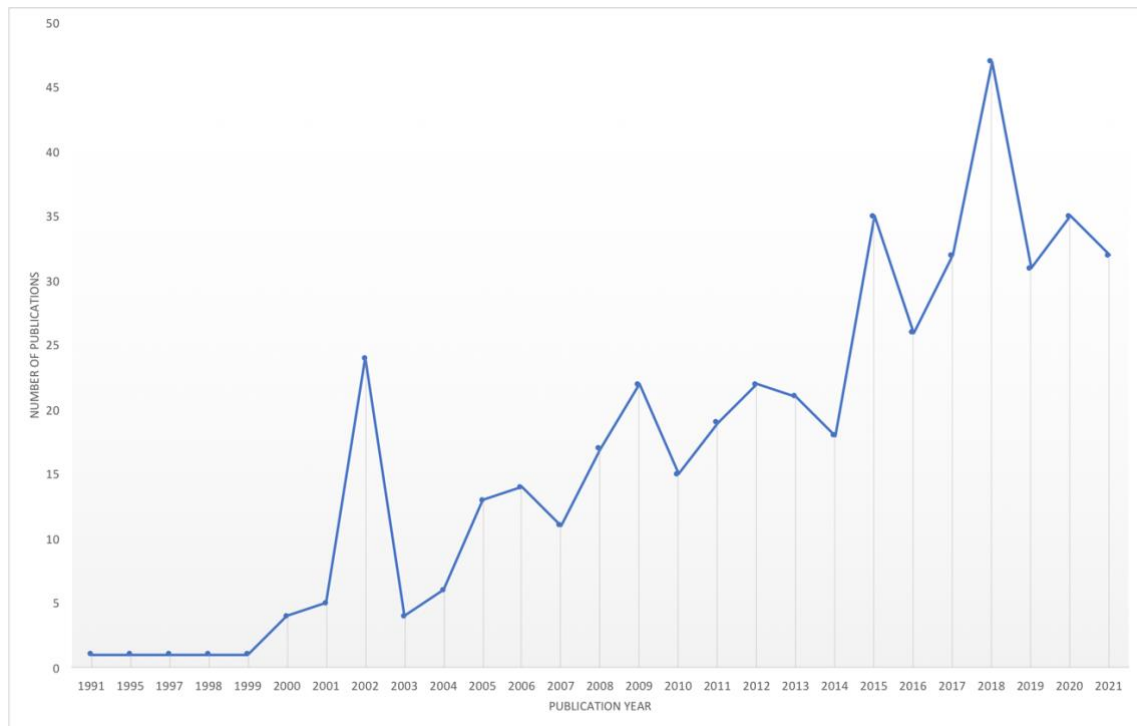
Snyder et al.'s (1991) theory defines hope as a dynamic motivational experience that is interactively derived from two distinct types of cognitive tools in the context of goal achievement—namely, pathways and agency thinking. His theory proposes that hope results from an individuals' perceived ability to develop numerous and flexible pathways towards their goals, allowing them to identify barriers and strategies to overcome these as they move towards goal achievement (WayPower). It is further fuelled by the individuals' sense of agency in their goal pursuit, defined as goal-directed energy or determination to succeed (WillPower) (Snyder et al., 1991). These two factors are theorized to be positively related yet distinct (Snyder, 1989). That is, one can have a strong sense of agency without necessarily demonstrating successful pathways planning towards their goals. However, the additive, reciprocal relationship between the two factors results in a cumulative positive experience of hope that provides the dynamic motivation to *act* – a key differentiator of hope theory from other related constructs such as optimism and self-efficacy (Snyder, 2002). The theory has expanded from its original proposition of hope as a trait, or disposition consistent across time and situations, to now include evidence of hope as a state or momentary experience (Snyder et al., 1996), as well as being specific to certain life domains (Robinson & Rose, 2010).

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The last 30 years have seen significant growth in the research on hope theory, demonstrating the applicability and relevance of the theory that has built its own 'epic story'. A comprehensive search of the literature that examined the central tenets and correlates of hope theory was conducted across multiple databases, including Ovid (PsycInfo), Web of Science, PubMed, EbscoHost (ERIC and ERC), and Scopus. To explore evidence of the growth and reach of this theory across disciplines and applications, we mapped this literature over time (see Figure 1) and across disciplines (see Figure 2). It should be noted that given the focus on the methodological and meta-theoretical foundations of this paper, the review was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles and doctoral theses. It does not represent the significant number of chapters and books that have also been published, nor the articles that have utilized hope theory as a theoretical argument to explain their findings, both of which further evidence the significant impact and application of this theory.

Figure 1

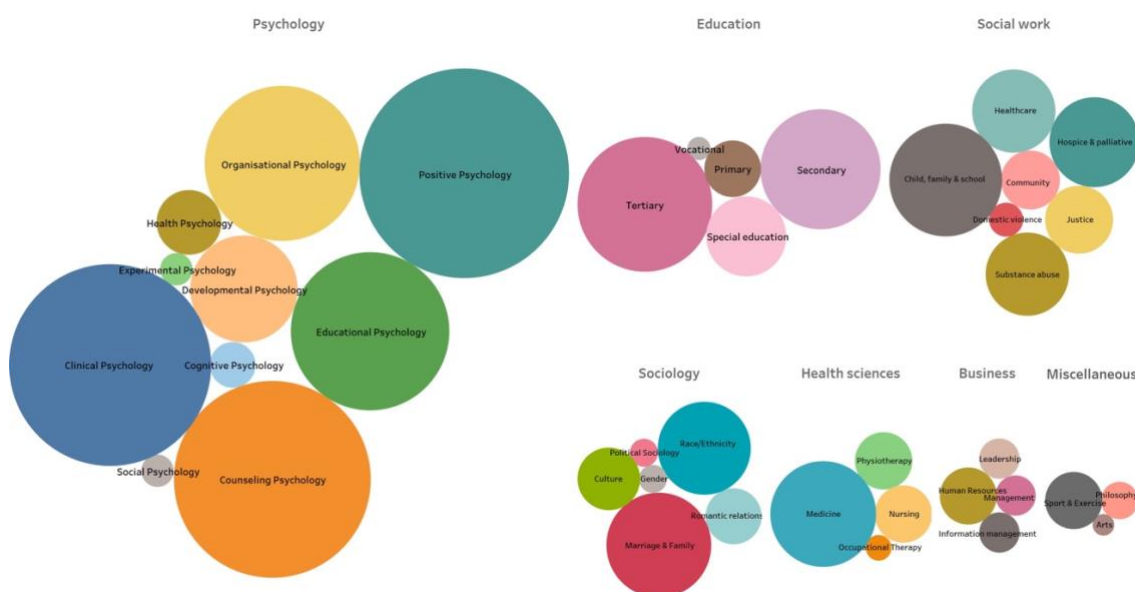
Growth in Number of Peer-Reviewed Publications in Hope Theory by Year (1991-2021)



Apart from a slight decline in publications over the 2020/2021 years, which could be explained by the significant impact of the global pandemic on research, there has been a consistent growth pattern in the development of the evidence base for hope theory. Snyder's theory has also attracted researchers across a broad range of disciplines and applications, which has seen an expansion beyond psychology to a range of applications such as education, sport, psychotherapy, organizational science, and medicine (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Constellation Map Showing Clusters of Application of Hope Research Across Disciplines



Placing the development of this theory in a sociohistorical context is essential in elucidating some of the dominant ways of knowing or epistemology that underpin the evidence base. Psychological researchers, particularly in the context of building an evidence base to argue for the merits of a new field such as positive psychology, have been grounded in a specific sociohistorical narrative of what constitutes new knowledge (Shotter, 1993). In this context, it is unsurprising that positivist approaches have dominated the assumptions that underpin hope theory development and subsequent research methodologies. They arose in the sociohistorical context of Seligman’s call to arms for a ‘rigorous’ approach to building knowledge of what makes life worth living, driven by the presiding narrative in psychological research at the time that ‘rigorous’ equated to knowledge derived in quantitative terms.

Hope theory was also developed within the context of the rise of motivational literature and cognitive revolution occurring during this period. Snyder (2002) himself comments on the significant influence of Karl Menninger. The latter actively

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encouraged the prioritization of cognitive processes, with emotions being conceptualized as a secondary affective response to cognitive appraisals of agency and pathways planning. What resulted was a theory of hope as a way of thinking, with emotional responses proposed to be a consequence of the experience of hope rather than a fundamental contributor to driving goal-related performance (Snyder et al., 1999).

The language that Snyder used to communicate the theoretical tenets of this theory indicates a dynamic process, such that adaptive behaviors and characteristics are both the cause and consequence of hope (Snyder, 2002). However, when driven by a process of knowledge acquisition that necessitates the development of measurement scales through factor analysis, the consequence was an operationalization of hope as individual factors rather than an interconnected construct. The resulting literature thus predominantly focuses on the contributory roles of these two factors - both independently and as a combined factor - than on the dynamics between them. Further, the contributions of emotional responses or other types of causal attributions that enable hope to emerge have also been overlooked. While Snyder incorporates the feedback and feedforward loops of emotions and cognitions in his theoretical model, this is not operationalized in his measure of hope. The more reductionistic nature of the methodologies to date also makes it harder to interpret the potential multi-directionality of these relationships and the mechanisms through which hope emerges.

3.2.1. The landscape of hope in university students

The shortcomings and limitations discussed above are well evidenced in a review of the literature in the university student population. A review of over 60

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empirical studies on young people in higher education has highlighted the dominance of positivist epistemological approaches underpinning much of the research. There is no doubt that these methodologies have made a significant contribution to the knowledge that young people with a high sense of hope exhibit adaptive psychological and school-related functioning (see Table 1). For example, this body of evidence has demonstrated that hope is related to numerous factors relevant to the success of young people during their tertiary studies. Hope has direct associations with academic achievement (Collins et al., 2009; Davidson et al., 2012; Feldman et al., 2015; Feldman & Kubot, 2015; Griggs & Crawford, 2017; Snyder et al., 2002), as well as a range of characteristics related to academic success, including perceived control and exam performance (Crane, 2014), coping strategies for study (Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000), persistence (Muwonge et al., 2017), psychological grit (Cavazos Vela et al. 2018), self-efficacy (Davidson et al., 2012; Macaskill & Denovan, 2013), higher engagement and motivation (Dixson, 2019), autonomous learning, social self-efficacy and self-esteem (Macaskill & Denovan, 2013).

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Table 1

Summation of Research Testing Hope Theory Propositions, Correlates, and Outcomes in Young People in Higher Education

| Author(s), Year | Approach | Methods/Design | Antecedents | Correlates and Outcomes | Mediators/Moderators | Location |
|----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------------|--|--|----------|
| | | | | <i>Academic achievement and/or graduation success</i> | | |
| Snyder et al., 2002 | Deductive | Regression (longitudinal) | | GPA & Graduation status | | USA |
| Savage & Smith, 2007 | Deductive | Regression | | Degree attainment | | USA |
| Collins et al., 2009 | Deductive | Regression | | Assessment performance | | USA |
| Papantoniou et al., 2010 | Deductive | Path analysis | | Grades | Learning strategies | Greece |
| Davidson et al., 2012 | Deductive | Quasi-experimental | | Grades* | | Israel |
| Feldman et al., 2015 | Deductive | Quasi-experimental | | GPA* | | Israel |
| Feldman & Kubota, 2015 | Deductive | Path analysis | | GPA | Academic hope** & academic self-efficacy | USA |
| Griggs & Crawford, 2017 | Deductive | Path analysis | | GPA | Core self-evaluations | USA |
| | | | | <i>Characteristics related to study success</i> | | |
| Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000 | Deductive | Correlational | | Coping strategies for study | | USA |
| Davidson et al., 2012 | Deductive | Correlational | | Sense of coherence, self-efficacy* | | Israel |
| Macaskill & Denovan, 2013 | Deductive | Experimental | | Autonomous learning, course self-efficacy (agency only) Social self-efficacy Self-esteem | | UK |
| Muwonge et al., 2017 | Inductive | Path analysis | | Persistence** | | Uganda |
| Vela et al. 2018 | Inductive | Regression | | Psychological grit | | USA |
| Dixson, 2019 | Deductive | Cluster analysis | | Higher engagement and motivation | | USA |
| Luo et al., 2019 | Deductive | Path analysis | | Learning outcomes (cognitive and non-cognitive) | | Taiwan |
| | | | | <i>Goal progress/attainment</i> | | |

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| Author(s), Year | Approach | Methods/Design | Antecedents | Correlates and Outcomes | Mediators/Moderators | Location |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|-------------|---|---|-----------|
| Feldman et al., 2009 | Deductive | Path analysis (longitudinal) | | Goal attainment | Goal specific hope** | USA |
| Feldman & Dreher, 2012 | Deductive | Experimental | | Goal progress | | USA |
| Crane, 2014 | Deductive | Regression | | Exam performance, approach motivations, perceived control | | Australia |
| Cheavens et al., 2019 | Deductive | Regression | | Important, prosocial, long- term, and challenging goals | | USA |
| | | | | <i>Academic achievement and/or graduation success</i> | | |
| Snyder et al., 2002 | Deductive | Regression (longitudinal) | | GPA & Graduation status | | USA |
| Savage & Smith, 2007 | Deductive | Regression | | Degree attainment | | USA |
| Collins et al., 2009 | Deductive | Regression | | Assessment performance | | USA |
| Papantoniou et al., 2010 | Deductive | Path analysis | | Grades | Learning strategies | Greece |
| Davidson et al., 2012 | Deductive | Quasi-experimental | | Grades* | | Israel |
| Feldman et al., 2015 | Deductive | Quasi-experimental | | GPA* | | Israel |
| Feldman & Kubota, 2015 | Deductive | Path analysis | | GPA | Academic hope** & academic self-efficacy | USA |
| Griggs & Crawford, 2017 | Deductive | Path analysis | | GPA | Core self-evaluations | USA |
| | | | | <i>Characteristics related to study success</i> | | |
| Onwuegbuzie & Snyder, 2000 | Deductive | Correlational | | Coping strategies for study | | USA |
| Davidson et al., 2012 | Deductive | Correlational | | Sense of coherence, selfefficacy* | | Israel |
| Macaskill & Denovan, 2013 | Deductive | Experimental | | Autonomous learning, course self-efficacy (agency only) Social self-efficacy Self-esteem | | UK |
| Muwonge et al., 2017 | Inductive | Path analysis | | Persistence** | | Uganda |
| Vela et al. 2018 | Inductive | Regression | | Psychological grit | | USA |
| Dixon, 2019 | Deductive | Cluster analysis | | Higher engagement and motivation | | USA |
| Luo et al., 2019 | Deductive | Path analysis | | Learning outcomes (cognitive and non-cognitive) | | Taiwan |

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| Author(s), Year | Approach | Methods/Design | Antecedents | Correlates and Outcomes | Mediators/Moderators | Location |
|---|-----------|-----------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|-----------|
| <i>Goal progress/attainment</i> | | | | | | |
| Feldman et al., 2009 | Deductive | Path analysis (longitudinal) | | Goal attainment | Goal specific hope** | USA |
| Feldman & Dreher, 2012 | Deductive | Experimental | | Goal progress | | USA |
| Crane, 2014 | Deductive | Regression | | Exam performance, approach motivations, perceived control | | Australia |
| Cheavens et al., 2019 | Deductive | Regression | | Important, prosocial, long- term, and challenging goals | | USA |
| <i>Wellbeing and adjustment</i> | | | | | | |
| Chang & deSimone, 2001 | Deductive | Path analysis | | Psychological adjustment (direct & indirect) | Appraisals and coping | USA |
| Denovan & Macaskill, 2013 | Inductive | Interpretive/ phenomenological | | Stress and coping in transition to university | | |
| Liu et al., 2017 | Inductive | Regression | | Adjustment to collective trauma | | USA |
| Griggs & Crawford, 2017 | Deductive | Path analysis | | Emotional wellbeing | Core self-evaluations | USA |
| <i>Career choice/vocational calling</i> | | | | | | |
| Phillips, 2011 | Deductive | Path analysis | | Vocational calling (for women but not men) | | USA |
| Feldman & Dreher, 2012 | Deductive | Experimental | | Vocational calling & life purpose | | USA |
| Eren, 2015 | Inductive | Path analysis | | Satisfaction with career choice and sense of responsibility | | Turkey |
| Buyukgoze-Kavas, 2016 | Deductive | Regression | | Career adaptability and resilience | | Turkey |
| <i>Predictors of hope</i> | | | | | | |
| Ahmet & Umran, 2014 | Deductive | Regression | Authenticity* | | | Turkey |
| Soria et al., 2015 | Deductive | Regression | Strengths- awareness and self-efficacy | | | |
| Cole et al., 2018 | Deductive | Path analysis | Gender role conflict (negative relationship) | Gender socialization - conformity to masculine norms (agency only) | | USA |

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| Author(s), Year | Approach | Methods/Design | Antecedents | Correlates and Outcomes | Mediators/Moderators | Location |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------|--|---|------------------------------|----------|
| Luo et al., 2019 | Deductive | Path analysis | Social support, belonging, self-esteem | | | Taiwan |
| Chang et al., 2019 | Deductive | Path analysis | Positive affect | Life satisfaction | Hope agency but not pathways | China |
| <i>Individual differences</i> | | | | | | |
| Chang & Banks, 2007 | Inductive | Regression | Life satisfaction, problem-solving style, positive affect, problem orientation | Variations in levels of agency and pathways thinking between Latino, European, Asian, and African Americans | | |

Note: This table is not exhaustive but rather represents a sub-set of the research in this population. It was scoped to include core relationships relevant to adaptive university experience for students

Unless otherwise stated, the relationships in the table are related to trait measures of hope

* Related to state measure of hope

** Related to domain measures of hope

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The literature has evidenced strong links between hope and measures of psychological and emotional wellbeing in higher education students (Bernardo et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2019; Chang & Banks, 2007; Griggs & Crawford, 2017; Macaskill & Denovan, 2013; Wandeler & Bundick, 2011). Therefore, hope is an influential protective factor for mental health and wellbeing, making it particularly valid, valuable, and relevant to the challenging transition periods both into and out of tertiary studies. The buffering and building effects hope provides are relevant for building capability to thrive and managing significant challenges. For example, hope mediates psychological adjustment, even in the face of trauma and adversity (Liu et al., 2017), and acts as a protective factor for suicide risk (Davidson & Wingate, 2011; Lucas et al., 2020).

It is also pertinent that hope may be particularly important for those in lower socioeconomic situations, as it is neither significantly related to intelligence (Snyder et al., 2002) nor income (Gallup, 2009). In general, high hope individuals are energetic and intrinsically motivated; able to set clear goals based on their own standards rather than others, and perceive obstacles as challenges that they can overcome with contingency planning (Chang, 1998; Gallagher et al., 2017; Lopez, 2010; Snyder, 2002). Increased hope can act as an enabling factor for those in lower socioeconomic situations, broadening perspectives on the possibilities available and providing motivation to tap into resources to support goal achievement (Dixson et al., 2017).

Hope may also be considered a robust social leveler. Hope can mediate the relationship between socioeconomic status and academic achievement (Dixson et al., 2017). It is predictive of adaptive functioning in an educational setting, even when controlling for intelligence (Snyder et al., 1997), prior academic history (Gallagher et al., 2017), and self-esteem (Snyder et al., 2002). There is also evidence that hope is

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particularly important in predicting student resilience, especially in response to uncertainty (Goodman et al., 2017). Indeed, as studies begin to emerge from the recent global pandemic, we can see the role that hope played in navigating some of the extraordinary challenges facing students. For example, a recent study of nearly 6,000 Chinese students in the first wave of lockdowns indicated that hope moderated the relationship between family functioning, loneliness, and mental health (Pan et al., 2021). This research evidences that hope is a critical construct to explore further as we prepare our youth for a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. However, it does not tell us the story of the mechanisms through which these positive associations are achieved. In essence, returning to our Star Wars analogy, this got us straight into the action while acknowledging an untold history still to explore.

3.2.2. The missing pieces of the story: Identifying core gaps in the research

In recent years, this missing storyline has begun to be addressed in the hope literature. Several studies utilized path analysis to examine the mediation or moderation role that agency and pathways thinking play in the links to adaptive outcomes. For example, Luo et al. (2019) tested a comprehensive model of the role different aspects of hopeful thinking play in linking to various factors that support learning outcomes, such as teacher and peer support, self-esteem, and belonging. However, the extant literature predominantly focused on demonstrating the utility of hope, missing a depth of examination on some of the core tenets of the theory. This includes its antecedents and the pathways through which hope develops. Cheavens et al. (2019) cite this as their core motivation in a recent study that validated that dispositional hope was related to pathways-generating behaviors and goal setting.

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A deeper analysis of the hope literature in university students shows that researchers have not yet thoroughly examined whether hopeful cognitions lead to positive affect or indeed whether the emotional experience is a mechanism that develops agency or pathways thinking. Snyder's theory is that these create an iterative and reciprocal feedback system, but how this has been operationalized and evaluated in the current literature does not build up the 'whole picture' of this dynamic process. The two-factor measurement of hope and subsequent analyses of its antecedents, correlates, and outcomes precludes an analysis of the dynamic interaction between these factors to facilitate adaptive relationships, including the mechanisms through which the theoretical reciprocal feedback system functions.

Hope also forms a nomological network with other expectancy variables such as self-efficacy, locus of control, and optimism that have been shown to lead to adaptive outcomes (Tennen et al., 2002). While evidence has demonstrated that these variables are distinct but related constructs (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999), much of the research has used path analyses to explain their moderation or mediation impact on adaptive outcomes. However, we believe that this 'component' approach to the operationalization of hope does not fully represent the rich and complex interactions that may account for these relationships. With this model of measurement we cannot account for the ways in which pathways thinking and agency thinking may interact in different circumstances, limiting our knowledge and resulting practice to enhance opportunities for hope to emerge.

Despite claims that hope is malleable, there is also limited experimental research in this population that examines how hope develops or whether interventions based on the premises of hope theory effectively increase hope. The small number of

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experimental studies with young adults have mainly focused on how short hope interventions affect academic performance outcomes (Feldman et al., 2015; Harris, 2016; Mackaskill & Denovan, 2013), with some evidence of interventions increasing levels of hope (Davidson et al., 2012; Feldman & Dreher, 2012). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of hope interventions in both community and clinical settings reveal only small effect sizes and inconsistent results depending on the context in which they are delivered (Weis & Speredakos, 2011). Integrated interventions that include other practices based on adaptive constructs such as gratitude or psychological capital (a multi-component construct that includes hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism), have shown increases in hope (Baurman, 2015; Baumsteiger et al., 2019), which further indicates the need to understand the different mechanisms that facilitate the development of hope. Added to this is a lack of inductive or exploratory approaches in research designs that enable a more nuanced picture of hope emerging to be examined. In fact, of all the studies reviewed, only a small handful utilized a mixed-methods or qualitative design, and these were predominantly doctoral theses.

Our review has highlighted that more research is needed to develop a deeper understanding of the factors and interactions that enable hope to emerge in young people. However, we argue that this needs to extend beyond the linear models prevalent in existing meta-theoretical assumptions and methodologies. This is evident from examining the gaps in the evidence base we have discussed thus far and the dearth of hope in our young people. For example, the current landscape reveals that less than half (46%) of Australian and New Zealand school students could be classified as hopeful (Gallup, 2021), indicating that a significant portion of our youth lack abundant ideas and energy for the future. Unfortunately, this trend is replicated in

other OECD countries (Gallup, 2018) and highlights a ‘wicked’ problem that is complex, arises from non-linear dynamics, and may have multiple possible causes (Peters, 2017). To address such complexities calls for an expansion in approaches underpinning theoretical and methodological designs, allowing us to examine the complex interactions and factors that impact hope development in young people.

3.3. Adopting a systems view of hope

Hope theory, as a cognitive model centered on the individual, is grounded in the liberal individualist sociohistorical context in which it was conceived; however, the emergence of postpositivist and postmodern epistemologies signify growing awareness of the challenges inherent in defining truth in a way that transcends context and abstracts individuals from their environment (Gergen, 1990; Goldman & O’Connor, 2021; Ward et al., 2015). The development of social epistemologies such as social constructionism, that recognize the effects of social interactions and social systems, helps redress this imbalance (Goldman & O’Connor, 2021), and recent developments in positive psychology have acknowledged this with a call towards interdisciplinary perspectives that better address the complexity of human behavior (Kern et al., 2019; Lomas et al., 2020). In an eloquent analogy, Lomas and colleagues (2020) acknowledge the opportunity in the power and energy generated by the last three decades of research to now propel us forward with the emergence of a new wave in positive psychology that moves beyond the individual to embracing complexity. It is with this philosophical intent that we argue that the intersection of systems science and more recent developments in wellbeing science can help address some of the limitations inherent in the current meta-theoretical propositions of hope theory and may inform and energize the next wave of research in this area.

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Optimal functioning is recognized to be the outcome of complex and interactive processes, predispositions, and experiences (Roffey, 2015). It includes multiple contributory factors - personal and environmental (Keyes, 2006) - that occur in a nested ecological system. This dynamic ecological system encompasses the individual and many other layers of influence that support and guide development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). While this approach to understanding optimal functioning is well established in many fields (e.g., sociology, anthropology, biology), positive psychology has been criticized for ignoring the influence of the larger context in favor of its focus on the individual (Kern et al., 2019). However, recent advances have begun to address this limitation in different contexts, such as Lomas et al.'s (2015) proposal of the Layered Integrated Framework Example (LIFE) for applied positive psychology and Williams et al.'s (2016) Inside-Out-Outside-In (IO-OI) model of workplace happiness. However, this criticism is still relevant to Snyder's hope theory in its acontextual perspective of individual capacity.

Snyder et al. (1991) were quite clear in arguing that they had drawn a clear boundary around the individual, stating that their phenomenological conceptualization of hope could be considered egocentric in that it taps into how an individual perceives their ability to move towards goals, with external environmental influences being incorporated only through the lens of how the individual appraises them in relation to agency and pathways thinking. However, more recent advances in the development of hope theory among individuals from more collectivist social settings have expanded this to demonstrate the validity of an external and internal locus of hope. This additional dimension represents the influence of external agents (family, peers, spiritual) in the development of agency thinking (Bernardo, 2010; Bernardo et al.,

2018; Bernardo & Mendoza, 2020; Du & King, 2013), providing evidence of the importance of broader system influences in the emergence of hope.

Furthermore, consideration of the dynamics within the human system also provides the opportunity to re-consider the interplay between emotions, cognitions, and somatic experiences that can influence the emergence of hope. One of the limitations of the meta-theoretical assumptions of Snyder's theory lies in a dualism view that sees the mind as separate from the body and operating independently from the physical world (Buetow, 2007). It is now well-established that mental and physical wellbeing are intimately and bi-directionally linked (Kemp & Quintana, 2013; Steptoe et al., 2015). The vagus nerve, for example, provides a vital structure that communicates between mind and body, providing the opportunity for both thoughts and behavior to influence aspects of wellbeing such as hope (Mead et al., 2021). The solid evidence base that has emerged in recent years regarding the interdependency between various internal factors and the experience of wellbeing calls for a deeper examination of the dynamic interplay of elements within the human system that can contribute to the emergence of hope.

We argue that re-imagining hope theory within a dynamic systems lens can help shine a light on the multiple contributory factors that facilitate the emergence of hope. We aim to expand the theoretical mechanisms that may facilitate Snyder's conceptualization of a dynamic motivation system that enables goal-directed behavior, reflecting developing knowledge of the interplay between the human system and within social systems. Our goal in expanding these theoretical tenets is to operationalize some of the dynamics left on the 'editing floor' in the methodological translation of hope theory. For example, an extension of Snyder's two-factor model to

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a multi-component dynamic systems model can be achieved by including a more contextual motivational component (WhyPower) at the intrapersonal level, and a social-contextual component (WePower) at the interpersonal level. In the following sections, we address these proposed theoretical expansions to hope theory, including the theoretical mechanisms through which these components could contribute to the emergence of hope.

3.3.1. *WhyPower (intrapersonal context)*

One of the guiding assumptions underpinning hope theory is that humans are goal-oriented (Snyder, 1989, 1995; Snyder et al., 1991). Snyder (2002) positions the importance of goals being of sufficient value to the individual to sustain conscious thought characterizing high hope; however, this criterion is not well represented in the operationalization of hope. One item on the hope trait scale measures an individual's capacity to "come up with many ways to get the things in life that are important to me" (Snyder et al., 1991). While this is clearly linked to pathways thinking around goals, it does not account for the goal-directed energy that valuable goals can ignite. Incorporating a measure of 'sufficient value' in the individual's goals into a model of hope can provide vital insights into the mechanisms that may facilitate the emergence of hope and may be of particular importance for our research agenda's population, namely emerging adulthood. We argue that this is best operationalized as a sense of meaning in our goals or WhyPower.

A search for meaning is a critical developmental task for adolescents (Bronk, 2013; Damon & Malin, 2020). While definitions of meaning vary widely, there is a consensus that meaning has two major components: comprehension and purpose (Steger, 2018a). Comprehension involves making sense and integrating experiences,

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while the purpose component involves actively pursuing long-term goals that reflect one's identity but also transcend narrow self-interests (Steger, 2018b). Studies have shown that both these components are positively associated with measures of adaptive functioning in young people (Abe, 2016). In their review of the links between hope and meaning, Feldman et al. (2018) note that the two constructs are 'close cousins', both influencing and contributing to the other, with an average correlation of .67. This relationship is also reflected in the links between Reker and Wong's (1988) conceptualization of meaning; "cognizance of order, coherence and purpose in one's existence, the pursuit and attainment of worthwhile goals, and an accompanying sense of fulfillment" (p. 221) and key elements of hope theory. Snyder (2002) himself suggested that hope and meaning are 'companions', as he proposed that self-reflective hope thoughts lead to a sense of meaning.

While the strong links between meaning and hope have been demonstrated both longitudinally (e.g., Mascaro & Rosen, 2005) and cross-sectionally (e.g., Feldman & Snyder, 2005), the mechanisms through which this occurs have not yet been established. The comprehension component of meaning may provide valuable insights into how individuals develop a sense of agency and pathway thinking. For example, the process of making sense and integrating experiences may be a mechanism that facilitates a belief in one's capacity to move towards their goals effectively, as well as expediting divergent thinking that supports the development of pathways planning. In contrast, the purpose component may be a mechanism that facilitates goal-directed energy. Purpose also serves as a self-organising principle that stimulates goals and manages behavior; it is imperative in guiding decisions about the use of finite resources and likely to lead to greater persistence (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). Thus,

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a sense of WhyPower in ones' goals may lead to enhanced hope through providing energy and motivation with structure and direction (Mascaro & Rosen, 2005).

It is relevant to note that the search for meaning for many young people creates a sense of disconnect rather than leading them to a sense of purpose. One reason may be the context in which this occurs. For example, while many psychologists view purpose from a primarily individualistic perspective (eg. Ryff, 1989, Damon et al., 2003), Keyes (2011), a sociologist, argues for a conceptualization that reflects that our lives are interwoven within a social construction. He suggests that when viewed through the lens of complete human development, purpose is not just about our own individual sense of direction, but also whether our lives are constructive and contribute to the collective. He terms this authentic purpose, defined as "a quality of being determined to do or achieve an end...that employs one's gifts, brings a deep sense of worth or value, and provides a significant contribution to the common good" (p. 286).

The role of social connectedness and relationships as a source of meaning has been well documented (e.g., Delle Fave et al., 2011), making it an important component of WhyPower. Furthermore, in a comparison of the differential effects of hope and optimism on various aspects of wellbeing, it was shown that hope was more important in contributing to the more purposeful components of wellbeing (Gallagher & Lopez, 2009). While the inclusion of WhyPower into a dynamic systems model of hope seeks to operationalize some of the cognitive and affective mechanisms at the individual level, it does not fully address the interplay between the individual and their interpersonal context, especially in terms of their access to resources that can facilitate hope.

3.3.2. WePower (*interpersonal context*)

Bernardo (2010) has argued that a limitation of Snyder's approach is that it does not consider whether the pathways or sense of agency are self-determined or may involve external agents. Expanding the horizon to examine the multi-directional links between individuals and their social context may be particularly relevant when discussing an adolescent population due to the strong developmental need for social engagement (Siegel, 2014). The developmental stage of late adolescence/emerging adulthood incorporates a second sensitive period of brain maturation that triggers important health behaviors, and studies have demonstrated the important protective factors that social patterns can provide in shaping adolescent wellbeing trajectories (Viner et al., 2012). Therefore, it is proposed that integrating an interpersonal perspective into an expanded model of hope theory may enhance our understanding and facilitate better outcomes for young people in higher education. We operationalize this as a sense of connectedness, or WePower, representing an individual's ability to tap into resources within their social system.

A fundamental meta-theoretical assumption of Snyder's hope theory is that hope both acts as a resource and facilitates the acquisition of other resources that support healthy development and achievement. Resources can be defined as internal or external entities that are either valued and relevant in their own right, or can be used to obtain valued ends (Hobfoll, 2002). While hope theory has focused on internal resources to date, we propose that external resources are equally important, as are the interrelationships between both forms. For example, how does social connectedness (external) impact the perception of access to resources (internal)? This may be particularly pertinent to students who have moved from being a 'big fish in a

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small pond' in their secondary school context to being 'one of many fish in a large pond' in their university context, impacting their perception of access to resources.

Social resources play an essential role in goal attainment and enhanced wellbeing (Hobfoll, 2002), and thus are a critical factor to incorporate in a dynamic systems perspective of hope. Kelly's (1966) seminal work on the relationships between social resources and wellbeing demonstrated the importance of people's perception of access to resources within their ecological environment. He described an ecological interplay in which resources are transferred between people and their social settings, demonstrating the importance of expanding the horizon beyond the individual to explore how their experience within an interpersonal context may facilitate the emergence of hope. For example, the sharing of experiences with others may be a crucial factor that builds social bonds, allows individuals to soothe the experience of negative emotions that arise from stressful events, and tap into the knowledge and experience of others to help create pathways towards goals (Smyth et al., 2012). Lee and Gallagher (2018) found that high hope individuals actively seek the support of others in working towards their goals but are also likely to support the goal pursuits of others that serve to strengthen social bonds. Their research highlights the dynamic interplay between the individual and their interpersonal context in developing hope, supporting the need for an expanded perspective.

It is important to note that while these two additional components of WhyPower and WePower have been articulated as separate elements, we argue that hope is best conceptualized as an emergent property that cannot be fully understood by breaking the construct down into its constituent parts. Instead, it is theorized as an energy system derived from the dynamic interplay between the parts. However, how

to build up whole pictures of social phenomena poses a significant challenge that has created some controversy amongst systems thinkers as to what the best methodological approach is to achieve this (Flood, 2010).

3.4. What we measure (and how) matters

One of the inherent limitations in methodological approaches that arise from a philosophical perspective that takes “an atomistic, ontological view of the world as comprising discrete, observable elements and events that interact in an observable, determined and regular manner” (Collins, 2010, p. 38) is an oversimplification of dynamic processes. Logical positivist epistemology relies on reducing phenomena to the simplest elements and thus may limit the capacity to analyze the complexity and inherent ‘messiness’ that characterizes human functioning, including reducing influences of the environment.

Given this landscape of knowledge development, it is unsurprising to see quantitative research designs dominating the literature in hope theory to date. Friedman (2003) argues that this seemingly religious devotion to one method and their underlying epistemologies are a flawed form of “methodoltry, the undue elevation of a method to a sacred artifact” (p.817). While elements of this claim ring true, it is perhaps not a fair representation of the state of play in hope research to date. Indeed, these methods have built robust confidence in the impact of hopeful thinking and its role in adaptive functioning. What is less clear from this literature, driven by deductive reasoning in research design, is the complex interactions that enable hope to emerge. Snyder’s theory was seeded from his conversations with participants in his studies on excuse-making, but he has predominantly taken a top-down approach to theory development rather than a grounded theory approach. There is no doubt that his

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theoretical propositions draw on a solid evidence base, but this was not grounded in the lived experience of hope. We argue that there is more backstory (a prequel to the trilogy!) that would help articulate some missed nuances inherent in the experience of hope.

Some scholars have sought to remedy this limitation, but this has predominantly focussed on more marginalized populations such as domestic violence support workers (Crain & Koehn, 2012) and African American gay men living with HIV (Hergenrather et al., 2013). To our knowledge, there is only one study that has examined the lived experience of hope in university students, centered on prospective teachers and their hopes for their teaching careers. The results indicated hope oriented around an active/passive axis, providing support for some of the goal-oriented cognitive components present in Snyder's model, as well as a generalized positive expectation that is more representative of the construct of optimism (Eren & Yeşilbursa, 2017). Participants also reported that both internal and external sources, such as peers, family, and friends, contributed to the experience of hope, providing further support for the need to incorporate an interpersonal dimension. These results demonstrate how qualitative studies can complement and enrich an understanding of the lived experience of hope and how it impacts adaptive outcomes, such as teacher retention.

Studies of hope in recent years suggest a shift to more mixed-methods and qualitative designs (see Figure 3). However, this still represents a very small proportion of studies (approximately 10% in this review) consistent with trends reported in the broader positive psychology literature (Donaldson et al., 2015). This trend is to be expected in a field that initially embraced a perspective of positivism that views

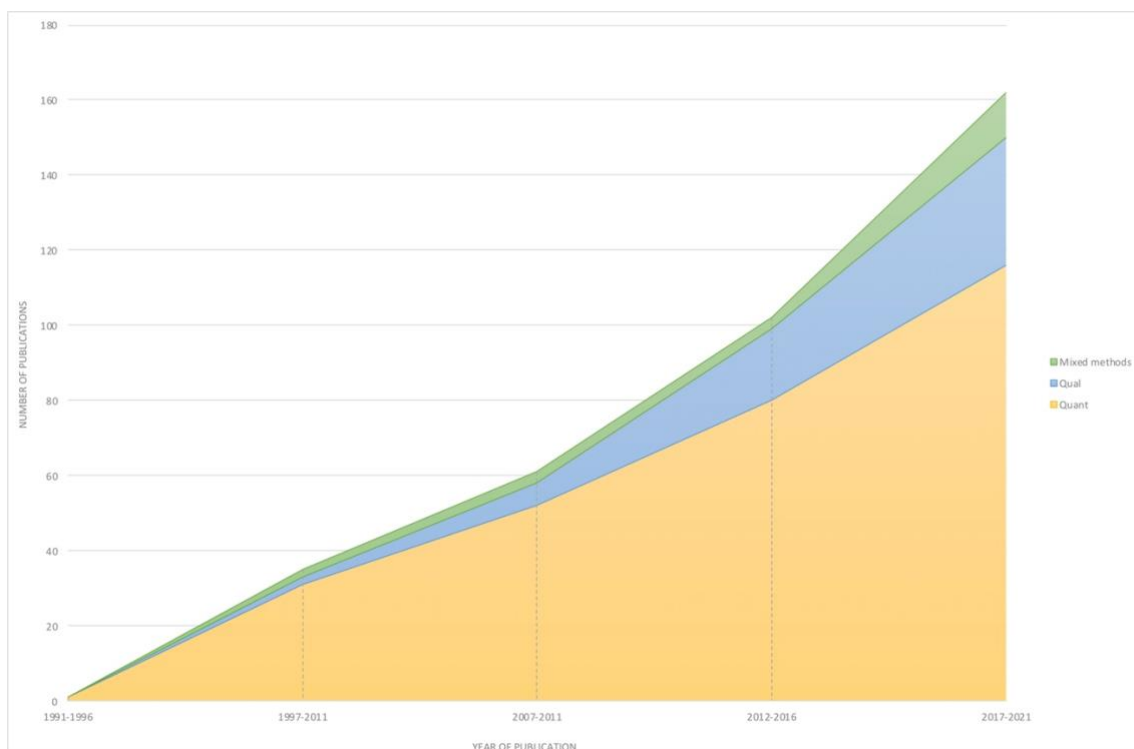
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qualitative research as less valuable and scientific (Mruk, 2006). Even when scholars aim to bring more methodological pluralism to their research, they have been thwarted by the dominant narrative of what constitutes scientific knowledge. For example, Shane Lopez, one of the leading scholars in hope research, reported being asked to reduce the qualitative aspects of a mixed-methods paper he submitted to a top positive psychology journal (personal communication, cited in Friedman, 2008).

Figure 3

Analysis of the Type of Research Method (Quantitative, Mixed-methods, Qualitative)

Utilized by Year



Expanding methodologies to include more qualitative components can facilitate inquiry into some of the under-researched areas of investigation in hope theory, such as enabling a deepened picture of how hope is experienced and the nature of how it acts as a protective or enabling factor in adaptive functioning.

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Qualitative methodologies are ideal for this type of research question because they value the messiness and complexity of the human experience in a sociocultural environment, which can build upon our existing knowledge base. We are not arguing that they are a better approach, but rather that developing methodological diversity increases knowledge formation (Hefferon et al., 2017). Said another way, qualitative approaches can add color and texture to the lines that have been drawn from the quantitative approaches to date. An interdisciplinary approach that integrates more holistic and inductive methods to examine the emergence of hope can help drive the next level of knowledge in the development of hope theory.

3.5. A 'new hope' in taking an integrative perspective

Several scholars have argued that consilience, the principle of bringing together evidence from seemingly independent sources to converge in a common groundwork of explanation, is one of the most promising pathways to scientific advancement (Scharmer, 2016; Siegel, 2014; Wilson, 1998). To achieve this requires a move away from the traditional manner of conducting research that leans towards homogenous and disciplinary silos, towards a more heterogeneous and interdisciplinary approach (Rhoten, 2004). Indeed, broadening both our epistemological and methodological horizons can enable us to reveal new and ground-breaking insights. However, it can also present unique challenges in integrating different ways of knowing; an ongoing challenge in interdisciplinary research, which requires mastery of specific competencies to facilitate respectful dialogue to deepen understanding and integrate different epistemological and methodological approaches (Larson et al., 2011).

Law (2016) underscores the importance of reflective practice in this endeavor, suggesting we 're-search' to integrate different perspectives. Re-searching refers to

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the practices of engaging in a reflective process throughout the entire life-cycle of research; from ongoing questioning about the assumptions that underpin our research design and selection of methods, through to self-questioning our assumptions and sociocultural context that influences our selection and interpretation of data (Law, 2016). Methodologies that acknowledge the co-creative process of knowledge-making with participants are also essential to achieve this aim (Alcoff, 1991). Unfortunately, methods rooted in positivist epistemologies typically assume the researcher possesses greater interpretative and analytical expertise and knowledge than the research participants (Kleinsasser, 2000).

Shotter (1993) also provides a strong argument for this approach in broadening our knowledge development. He positions the importance of 'knowing from within' as a third way of knowing, that complements our traditional focus on 'knowing that' and 'knowing how' in psychological research. Given the lack of diversity in positive psychology research dominated by Western, Industrialised, Educated, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) populations (Rao & Donaldson, 2015), this 'knowing from within' can give rise to a more nuanced perspective that is representative and validating of different views. Utilizing more inclusive participatory approaches that give voice and empower the participants themselves in developing knowledge can help bridge some of this gap.

The research agenda we are proposing utilizes a methodology that explicitly facilitates cocreation and participant agency in the research process. Using approaches that enable this, such as Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI), can add value in shedding light on participants' meaning and attributions to make sense of the experience of hope (Czarniawska, 2004). The origins of the PNI methodology are in the

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systems sciences, influenced by the development of Cynefin, a conceptual framework that helps make sense of influences in a complex and complicated environment (Snowden, 2002). PNI is an approach that senses patterns in the social system through the analysis of stories. The participants play a pivotal role in analyzing those stories to understand the system's complexity (Kurtz, 2014). Stories have long been used to help us navigate complex social problems, as words are used as tools for meaning-making and constructing mental models (Gottschal, 2012; Shotter, 1993). The inherent simplicity in using stories is that they are both nouns and verbs and thus can provide both research data and methodology for inquiry.

By involving participants in sharing stories and the sense-making process of research, we empower them to give voice to their own experiences and play a key role in contributing to knowledge development. It may also be that this method can provide a two-pronged role as both inquiry and intervention. For example, in a participatory narrative inquiry into mental health recovery, participants described the method as giving them hope, providing them with 'a ladder' that facilitated autonomy and direction to climb out of the loneliness and isolation of depression and reconnect with society and work (Torrissen & Sticklely, 2018).

Narrative has been described as a two-way reflexive process in which language is used as the vehicle to "construct, to organize, and to attribute meaning to our stories" (Anderson, 1997, p. 213). This process enables the storyteller to make sense of their experience through story sharing and invites the researcher into this sense-making process, giving them unique insight into lay theories of how hope emerges and is experienced. The use of narrative methods rather than surveys also allows us to represent and integrate changes and events in our lives into a comprehensive story.

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We can include causes and consequences of events, plots, subplots, and overarching themes to weave a coherent narrative of our experience (Smyth, Pennebaker & Arigo, 2012). The richness of stories as a source of data and methodology for investigating wicked problems lies in their inherent nature, that is, “stories form complex emergent patterns and all complex patterns have stories” (Kurtz, 2014, p.633).

PNI is an excellent example of methodological pluralism that integrates various data sources and ways of knowing (Friedman, 2008). For example, data derived from a more positivist epistemology can be integrated, forming part of the material for sense-making. They provide data into one perspective, while data from methodologies rooted in social constructivist epistemologies offer another view, including a gateway into the mental models that drive these perspectives (Kurtz, 2014). The triangulation of data supports the development of a deeper perspective of the subject of inquiry. PNI can also incorporate analytical methods from various disciplines such as systems mapping, natural language processing, and participatory theatre. This provides a unique process for integrating knowledge from different disciplinary perspectives and different meta-theoretical philosophies of knowledge.

Complex social problems deserve diverse perspectives to address the multiplicity and interconnectedness of potential causes and contributory factors. We contend that stories may be an under-tapped resource in the use of interdisciplinary research designs to examine the complexity of the human experience in a way that balances the boundaries of time and resources without compromising cohesiveness.

3.6. Conclusion

Our paper has sought to pave the way forward in the next generation of research in hope theory by outlining a ‘storyboard’ that explores both the backstory of

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the development of hope theory and a roadmap to uncover some of the as yet untold stories of hope. One of our goals in this critical review of hope theory was to pay homage to the scholarly icons of Rick Snyder and Shane Lopez, whose legacies live on in the impact their work has had across a broad range of disciplines. Their choice to ‘get straight into the action’ has paved the way for a significant number of eminent scholars who have followed in their footsteps and taken up the charge to carry on this vital work, providing us with crucial insights into the merits of hope as a fundamental resource to support thriving.

By analyzing the roots of the development of Snyder’s hope theory, we have provided insights into the sociohistorical context that influenced the meta-theoretical assumptions that underpin hope theory. This context helps us understand some of the technical limitations that have impeded the operationalization of hope theory and subsequently led to several gaps in the ensuing research base. Perhaps the most significant of these is the impact of the lost dynamics between elements that facilitate the emergence of hope. Of course, we know the story does not end here, but rather this may provide the necessary ‘cliff-hanger’ that creates the impetus and energy for the subsequent development of this story.

We propose that this is best achieved through a dynamic systems reconceptualization of hope as a pathway to addressing these limitations. This research agenda aims to create a new storyline that expands our operationalization of hope to deepen understanding of the dynamic interactions between the elements that create the unique alchemical reaction of hope. This may include introducing two new ‘characters’, namely WhyPower and WePower, expanding the theoretical horizons of hope to integrate systemic intrapersonal and interpersonal perspectives.

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However, to translate this vision to action, it is imperative that we broaden our methodological approaches to facilitate an examination of the complexities and interdependencies in such a model. In the same way that we have seen significant advances in technology since the first episodes of Star Wars that have enhanced the cinematic experience and storytelling, we can also draw on more sophisticated interdisciplinary methods now available to advance the study of hope. We advocate a pragmatist approach that pays homage to the wealth of knowledge generated through the methodologies that have dominated the research to date, while intentionally selecting diverse methods to broaden and deepen our understanding of the emergence of hope in young people. Engaging in research covering the full spectrum of epistemological perspectives can enable us to develop richer pictures of positive psychology's fundamental theories and principles; and, in doing so, realize the vision of 'a new hope' for the field.

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CHAPTER FOUR: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO STUDYING HOPE

This chapter builds on the previous chapter that argued for the need to expand our methodological approaches to studying complex wellbeing concepts like hope. This work was published in the *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology* and the author-accepted manuscript has been reproduced below. It begins by identifying some of the issues that have emerged from the dominance of positivist approaches in wellbeing research and proposes that storying research is an alternative approach to address these limitations. Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) is introduced as a new method that has not been used in the extant hope literature and is contrasted with other phenomenological methods. The additional benefits this methodology can provide in exploring complex dynamic experiences, particularly in including participants in the interpretative process, is a central focus of the manuscript. The article offers the first critical analysis of this methodology in the academic literature. The manuscript is reproduced in the academic conventions required for the journal and thus varies slightly from the format used throughout the thesis.

Storying research: Exploring the benefits of Participatory Narrative Inquiry as a
methodology for wellbeing research

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Abstract

As the field of positive psychology matures, many have called for an expansion in epistemological and methodological approaches to enable a more complex study of wellbeing. This article addresses this call by examining the benefits of using storying methods in wellbeing research. We explore how this can address some of the limitations in the extant psychological literature. Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) is introduced as an example of a storying methodology that can facilitate a democratised approach to studying complex phenomena. We outline the theoretical and meta-theoretical underpinnings of this approach and provide an overview of the essential and supplementary methods used within each phase of the methodology. The methodology is juxtaposed with other similar qualitative methods to support researchers in discerning what type of inquiries PNI may be best suited to. We argue that interdisciplinary methodologies such as PNI can support the development and refinement of contextually relevant theories and practices needed to progress the field of positive psychology as it enters its third wave of development.

Keywords: complexity; storying; interdisciplinary; participatory; mixed-methods

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Interest in the science of wellbeing continues to gather momentum, with a broad array of disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, economics, and population health, all exploring how to facilitate living a 'good life'. In particular, the field of positive psychology has made a significant contribution to this knowledge base, as evidenced by the substantial growth and impact of the literature over the last three decades (Donaldson et al., 2015; Rusk & Waters, 2013; Wang et al., 2023). Yet, several criticisms have been levelled at the field, many of which result from the dominance of research designed within a positivist epistemology (Diener et al., 2022; Kern et al., 2020; van Zyl et al., 2023). We contend that this result is an unfortunate unintended consequence of the desire in positive psychology to distinguish itself as a rigorous field of study with a limited definition of what constitutes research rigour.

Hayes and Hofmann (2021) argue that for a field to progress it needs to distinguish the strategies it uses from its core purpose, so limitations of the favoured approaches do not stunt progress. While their argument was aimed at how we address mental health in psychiatry and psychology, it could be equally applied to progressing our understanding of wellbeing in positive psychology. Wellbeing is a multi-faceted construct that has been conceptualised differently across disciplines, indeed, even within disciplines, as evidenced in the field of positive psychology (Alexandrova & Fabian, 2022; Lambert et al., 2015; Mead et al., 2021). While definitions may vary, it is now well-recognised that the experience of wellbeing emerges from the complex interplay of multiple contributory factors across the self as a system and within nested ecological systems (Mead et al., 2021; Roffey, 2015).

Unfortunately, the reductionistic methods required in experimental and correlational study designs, which have been the favoured approaches in positive

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psychology, limit the ability to explore complex dynamic patterns in context (Colla et al., 2022; Diener et al., 2022). There is no doubt that these methods have produced substantial knowledge about the factors to consider in wellbeing research and their relationship to desired outcomes. However, the overuse of these research strategies in the behavioural sciences, including positive psychology, has limited scientific progress in understanding the complex nature of wellbeing (Diener et al., 2022).

We are at a critical juncture in the development of the field where such limitations are raising questions that demand new approaches. Perhaps this marks the beginning of what Kuhn (1974) referred to as the ‘revolutionary’ phase of a scientific paradigm, where we begin to embrace new assumptions and perspectives. For example, these criticisms have led to a growing sophistication of research methods and intervention approaches (Ciarrochi et al., 2021; Kern et al., 2020). Indeed, there is discussion across a range of scholars of a ‘third wave’ of development that embraces complexity and the development of more contextually relevant theories (Kern et al., 2020; Lomas et al., 2021; Wissing, 2021). Employing more qualitative and mixed methods approaches has been argued as one of the first steps in facilitating such an endeavour, allowing a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the complex dynamics that enable wellbeing to emerge in different contexts (Diener et al., 2022; Lomas et al., 2021; van Zyl et al., 2023). There are early advances in this endeavour, with a growing appreciation of the different perspectives and knowledge that can be created from qualitative and mixed-methods modes of research in positive psychology (Gergen et al., 2015; Hefferon et al., 2017; Rich, 2017).

The use of narrative and phenomenological approaches, for example, have made substantial contributions to our understanding of wellbeing. The benefits of

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narrative methods to understand how individuals make sense of their experience of wellbeing, particularly in clinical work, are well-established (Bright et al., 2022; Sagan, 2012; Tarragona, 2013). The use of other rigorous qualitative methods, such as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), have also contributed to our understanding of the phenomenon of wellbeing, in areas such as positive psychology coaching (Fouracres & van Nieuwerburgh, 2020; Mills & Lomas, 2021), education (Clarke & Platt, 2023), and the arts (Hefferon & Ollis, 2006). Such methods provide a deep and nuanced understanding of the idiographic experience of wellbeing but are predominantly interpreted through the researcher. Participatory research methods, by comparison, aim to engage participants in a collective process of understanding, addressing some of the power differentials in the creation of knowledge (Belone et al., 2016). This practice supports one of the core principles proposed by Kern et al. (2020) to embrace complexity in our research endeavours.

Wellbeing is a value-laden phenomenon, and thus definitions or theories of wellbeing will be simultaneously descriptive and evaluative in nature, which philosophers refer to as a 'thick concept' (Alexandrova & Fabian, 2022). When such concepts are defined and measured by a limited group (eg. academics), it poses challenges to our scientific understanding of some of the nuances of the experience of wellbeing. As a result, scholars have argued for a more democratised approach to understanding wellbeing in context, which can be driven by the co-production of knowledge with participants (Alexandrova & Fabian, 2022; Hayes et al., 2012; Henriques et al., 2014). While participatory research methods offer such an approach, they are underutilised in positive psychology and psychology more broadly (Levac et al., 2019; Rodriguez Espinosa & Verney, 2021).

As the field matures and we move towards embracing complexity in our research inquiries, the time is ripe to consider a broad spectrum of methodologies that can contribute to building a holistic perspective of wellbeing. In this paper, we take up this challenge by exploring how an interdisciplinary participatory methodology, Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI), may contribute to this aim. While PNI has had limited use as a methodology in psychology, it is grounded in storying methods that have a long and rich history. We explore the merits of this methodology for wellbeing research, critically analysing how it may address some of the limitations of other approaches. Our aim is to position this lesser-known methodology alongside well-established quantitative and qualitative approaches, demonstrating how it can help us broaden our understanding and progress the field of wellbeing forward in research methodology and practice.

4.1. The power of story/ing methods for complex inquiries

PNI is a methodology that draws on narrative research traditions, and therefore, a discussion on the merits of storying methods for complex inquiries is warranted before examining the specifics of the approach. Stories are a natural process through which we make sense of the world and are part of our everyday language use (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Phillips & Bunda, 2018). Chawla (2011) suggests that “stories breathe their own breaths, they are organic in nature, and dynamic in process... As human beings, we are ‘storying’ beings.” (p. 16). Such a natural source of data that is dynamic in nature can counteract some of the limitations of self-report or laboratory-based methods. For example, stories are inherently situated within context (Creswell, 2013), they track experience over time (McAdams, 2001); and they can provide insights into causal coherence and the factors that may

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lead to particular experiences (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Importantly, stories are used ubiquitously across cultures, ages, and disciplines (Gottschall, 2012; Hutchens, 2015), which is particularly relevant in cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research. These features of stories help address some of the limitations of cross-sectional and factorial-based research designs that limit our exploration and understanding of contextual dynamics.

Stories or narratives can be considered a data source, a research method, and a way of theorising about the world (Carless & Douglas, 2017). Some researchers use the term 'narrative' to distinguish the inquiry and 'story' to indicate the phenomenon or data source (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990); however, the consistency of these terms across the literature is not this clean-cut. The way stories are used in research depends on ontological and epistemological assumptions. For example, qualitative researchers who use narrative techniques may see the world as being socially constructed, and thus stories are selected as a method to explore how a particular group make sense of a specific experience. From this perspective, stories provide the mechanism for illustrating and informing theory that seeks to understand and explain the nuances of experience – a process that Holman Jones (2016) describes as a "dance of collaborative engagement" (p. 229).

Phillips and Bunda (2018) align with this view and argue for a more holistic term: 'story/ing', defined as the "act of making and remaking meaning through stories" (p. 8), to refer to inquiry, theorising, and sharing of research. The verbification of the term story/ing is intentional, as they position the storying process throughout the research cycle: from conceptualising the investigation, collecting stories, analysing and

theorising, and finally, in the research presentation. Thus, they argue that storying is axiological, ontological, and epistemological.

4.1.1. Tale as old as time: Learning from the wisdom of indigenous cultures

While many disciplines have recently experienced a narrative turn, storying has long been a method of scientific knowledge development in many indigenous cultures (Phillips & Bunda, 2018). Some argue that the established approaches to tackling wicked problems, such as the lack of wellbeing across the globe, have typically been steeped in Western scientific methodologies that pursue knowledge in an analytical way (Goodchild, 2021). Indigenous knowledge systems, by comparison, are deeply steeped in complex systems' ways of knowing, reflecting the pursuit of 'wisdom in action' over 'wisdom in abstraction' (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011). Indeed, while the word 'system' in English is typically represented as a noun, in indigenous languages, such as the Anishinaabe First Nations people of North America, it is used to describe a process that reflects relationality (Goodchild, 2021).

Storying is a method that can foster a transformation in relational understanding, both in relationship with self, through self-reflection, and with others through sharing of experience in community (Cajete & Pueblo, 2010). Such a relational approach addresses some of the core principles of Systems Informed Positive Psychology (Kern et al., 2020) by aiding knowledge development in the context of the greater whole. It further encourages awareness of different perspectives and can bring to light the limits of our understanding, including our inherent biases (Cajete & Pueblo, 2010). The underlying processes that facilitate the ancient practice of storying can now be explained by the neural coupling that occurs when people listen to others' stories, supporting social cognition that emerges from an interpersonal rather than personal

space (Hasson et al., 2012). This relational approach, where meaning is co-constructed, distinguishes storying from narrative methods that prioritise the researcher's knowledge in the analysis.

We believe it is time to soften (not silence) the loud voices of Western science that dominate academia and pave the way for remembering the wisdom inherent in our indigenous knowledge systems, which have sustained thousands of generations. However, this requires us to find a way to braid together different epistemologies, and we must begin with the premise that both are equal *and* differentiated. Ermine (2007) encourages us to seek the space between epistemologies, what he calls the ethical space, bridging our ways of knowing between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge systems. The ethical space is a place where we “detach from the cages of our mental worlds and we assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur” (p. 202). Deepening our understanding of different perspectives requires a relational mindset of connection rather than separation, characterised by respect, caring, compassion, and empathy (Goodchild, 2021). These characteristics emerge from a place of wellbeing. Thus, by embodying wellbeing capabilities in our research practice, we can bridge different ways of knowing and lead research steeped in ethics and integrity. In doing so, we also have the potential to begin to decolonise our ways of knowing and doing research, and thus restore the historical imbalances between Western and Indigenous science (Ahenakew, 2017).

4.2. Origin story: Theoretical and methodological origins of PNI

Against this backdrop, we would like to introduce PNI as a storying methodology that draws from a range of multi-disciplinary research techniques. PNI is not grounded in a single epistemological paradigm but instead braids different ways of

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knowing into a package that works (Kurtz, 2014). Combining principles and methods from various approaches is a trend that qualitative researchers increasingly use to address the limitations of a singular paradigm (Lal & Suto, 2012). However, in doing so, due consideration must be given to the rationale for combining approaches, ensuring the integrity of philosophical assumptions that underpin the integrated approach (Lal & Suto, 2012). In this section, we outline the rationale for blending methodologies that have informed the development of PNI to provide an understanding of the meta-theoretical construction of the approach.

We begin, however, by exploring its origin story, as this has influenced its development and use in the literature. The development of the methodology began in practice rather than academic research in 1999 with two parallel explorations of organisational narrative. In the Knowledge Socialization group at IBM Research, Cynthia Kurtz carried out research projects exploring stories in organisations. At IBM Global Services, Sharon Darwent and Dave Snowden worked with stories to support organisational change and decision support. While each independently developed aspects of what would become PNI in their parallel work, in 2001 they began to work together, joining their emerging approaches. They tested and refined the methodology in research and consulting projects in the government, academic, for-profit, and non-profit sectors until 2009, when they began to move in different directions.

In 2008, Kurtz published the first edition of a foundational text, *Working with Stories in Your Community or Organization*, describing the theoretical and methodological background of the methodology. In 2010, while working on the third edition of the book, she named the approach Participatory Narrative Inquiry. It is worthy of note that other scholars have used this term to refer to narrative inquiry

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that is participatory in nature, including Hooley (2009) in the context of indigenous education, Parker (1996) in his dissertation on nurses' moral orientations and ways of knowing, and Lander (1999) in a paper that sought to address some of the contradictions between theory and practice that trouble qualitative research. This paper focuses specifically on the methodology described by Kurtz.

The primary theoretical origins of PNI are narrative inquiry and participatory action research, and as such, the methodology is grounded in a social constructionist philosophy. Narrative inquiry provides rich insights into psychological and social phenomena through participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). However, one of the criticisms of the methodology is the blurring of interpretative boundaries between researcher and participant (Riley & Hawe, 2005), particularly as narrative inquiry has traditionally been driven by researchers, with limited participant involvement in analysis. PNI addresses this limitation by integrating fundamental principles from participatory action research (PAR), emphasising participation and collaboration with community members affected by the research inquiry (Baum et al., 2006).

Pursuing the ideals of democratising knowledge co-production espoused by Alexandrova and Fabian (2022) requires an expanded epistemological understanding of "what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge counts" (Phillips et al., 2022, p. 1). In the same way that the mental health recovery movement advocates for processes to support moving away from 'doing to' to 'doing with' participants (Slade et al., 2017), PNI integrates PAR and narrative inquiry principles to elevate the position of the participant to co-researcher, prioritising their expertise in interpreting their lived experience (Phillips et al., 2022). In doing so, PNI guards against a power relationship that positions researchers as privileged knowledge holders and the researched as

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disempowered sources of information (Borland, 1997; Calabria & Bailey, 2021).

However, important ethical considerations must be incorporated to ensure that this is managed effectively, as will be discussed further.

The methodology also draws on influences from oral history, as the collaborative process between storytellers (interviewees) and narrators (researchers) can generate new insights through story sharing, reviewing, interpreting, and presenting new narratives (Thomson, 2003). Like PAR, oral history is situated within an interpretivist paradigm that draws on the lived experience of participants and is grounded in the social construction of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In larger PNI projects, this shared authority in knowledge development is sometimes supported using mixed-methods techniques that draw on the strategic use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Such approaches leverage the insights achieved by combining different epistemological paradigms, allowing complementary or contradictory patterns to emerge (Saldaña, 2011). Exploring these patterns with participants can help explore how and why specific factors relate (or not) and thus provide a process to self-correct theories and deepen knowledge development through integrating different perspectives (van Zyl et al., 2023). Vaughn and Jacquez (2020) argue that such a collaborative approach can enhance research quality and rigour through the mutually reinforcing partnership formed by the participants' real-world knowledge and experience with the researchers' theoretical and methodological expertise.

Finally, PNI integrates ideas from anthropology, participatory theatre, folklore studies, complexity theory, and narrative therapy (Kurtz, 2014). This interdisciplinary approach builds a creative suite of tools tailored to the participants and inquiry at hand. In summary, the PNI approach weaves together a tapestry with rich and deep

research origins, enabling the integration of other ways of knowing into a cohesive set of methods to explore complex phenomena. Importantly, it does so with a clear grounding in a social constructionist epistemology with a multi-ontological framework, ensuring that it does not fall into the common pitfall of combining approaches without anchoring in a clear epistemological or theoretical position (Caelli et al., 2003).

4.3. PNI defining features: The essential and extended

The inclusion of each of the words in PNI — *participatory*, *narrative*, and *inquiry* — reflects the defining features of the approach. *Participatory* distinguishes the approach from traditional narrative inquiry, highlighting the core component of involving participants in the interpretative process of the research (Kurtz, 2014). This is a foundational premise of participatory research that prioritises participants' voices and experiences in the research process (Abma et al., 2019). How participants are involved can vary at each research design stage, with decision points along a continuum that ranges from academic-led to shared decision-making between researchers and partners (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). However, participant involvement in making sense of the stories and other data collected is pivotal to PNI.

The term *narrative* indicates the primacy of stories as the central data source in PNI. Personal stories of experience are sometimes supplemented with reflective responses to stories, statistical analyses of trends in story data, and data visualisations. However, the centrality of narrative as the core source of data distinguishes PNI from the opinion gathering of more deliberative approaches (Evans & Kotchetkova, 2009).

Finally, the term *inquiry* emphasises the core purpose of PNI as a pathway to revealing new insights, possibilities, and potentials (Kurtz, 2014). This purpose distinguishes from approaches that use stories to persuade, teach, or connect. In the

same way that the Appreciative Inquiry method uses the term ‘inquiry’ to indicate the systematic discovery of what gives life to a particular system, elevating the potentiality that exists within (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), PNI uses the same term to denote the importance of collectively exploring the problems and potentialities that emerge from stories of lived experience.

4.3.1. Essential phases: Story collection, sense-making, and story return

There are three essential phases to any PNI project, as outlined in Figure 1 below. This section outlines these core phases, discussing the purpose, data collection and interpretation methods, as well as some of the trustworthiness safeguards. These points are summarised in Table 1 using a PNI inquiry into a theory of change underpinning the empowerment of women in an international development program in Niger to illustrate each phase (Zucchini et al., 2022).

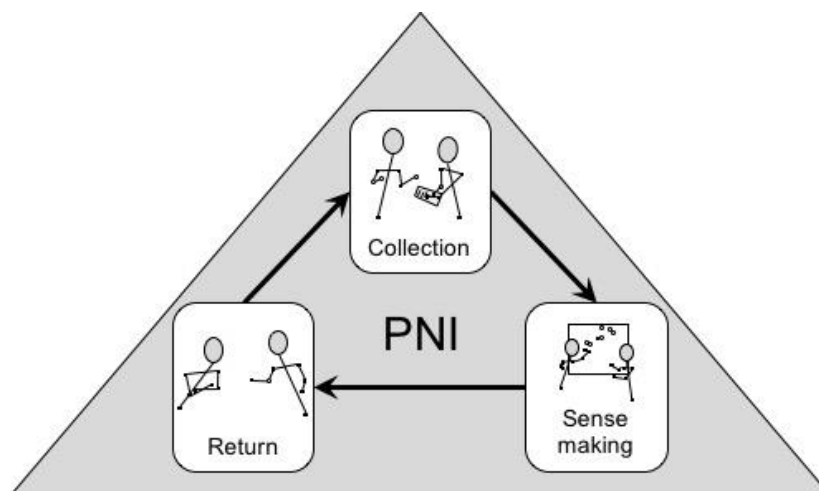


Fig. 1

Essential phases of Participatory Narrative Inquiry. Image used with permission from Kurtz (2014).

A PNI project commences with the *collection* of stories around a particular point of inquiry. For example, stories of experiences of hope could be collected to

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explore what enables hope in particular contexts. There are various methods through which stories may be collected, either individually (such as in interviews, narrative incident reports, journaling, or surveys) or collectively (such as in group interviews or facilitated story sessions). The choice of story collection method can be informed by an analysis of the context and the relevant skills of the researcher, allowing the maximum opportunity to accurately represent participants' experiences (Kurtz, 2014; Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). A critical component of the story collection phase is to include questions that explore what the story means to the participant who told it. While collective sense-making of the patterns across stories is covered in the next phase, this individual reflection is critical to understanding the underlying feelings and beliefs from the storyteller's perspective. PNI allows every participant's interpretation to be included, whether they participate in the sense-making process or not, creating a richer base of meaning in the story data (Kurtz, 2014).

When determining the number of stories that should be collected, Kurtz (2014) recommends the maximisation of 'narrative richness' in addressing the research inquiry. Narrative richness is a function of the stories' volume and utility. It is defined by how well the stories tap into a rich vein of experience and how well participant responses to interpretive questions tap into relevant interpretations. Therefore, maximising narrative richness may be achieved by choosing a story collection method that focuses on a smaller story set but facilitates deeper interpretive utility or by collecting a larger number of stories that allow pattern discovery across the dataset. The research questions and desired output drive decisions about volume and depth.

The second essential phase of PNI focuses on *making sense* of the collected stories. Kurtz (2014) draws on insights from a diverse range of disciplines to guide

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sense-making processes, enabling the adaptation of techniques from fields that have well-developed methods for identifying patterns in complex data to guide sense-making. Sense-making requires participants and researchers to move through iterative cycles of reflection and discussion on perspectives and interpretations of the stories. Sense-making begins with creating contact between the stories, inquiry purpose, and participants. The methods selected in this phase invite co-researchers to zoom in and out on the stories and responses as needed in a churning process or foraging loop for meaning-making. These methods may deconstruct aspects of the stories and responses to discover a deeper understanding of the internal feelings, beliefs, and values in the stories. In the churning phase, activities may include sorting or arranging stories in a landscape or timeline to help construct a coherent new understanding. The churning process allows a convergence of patterns and insights to emerge that can create a change in perspective. The entire sense-making process is outlined in Figure 2 below.

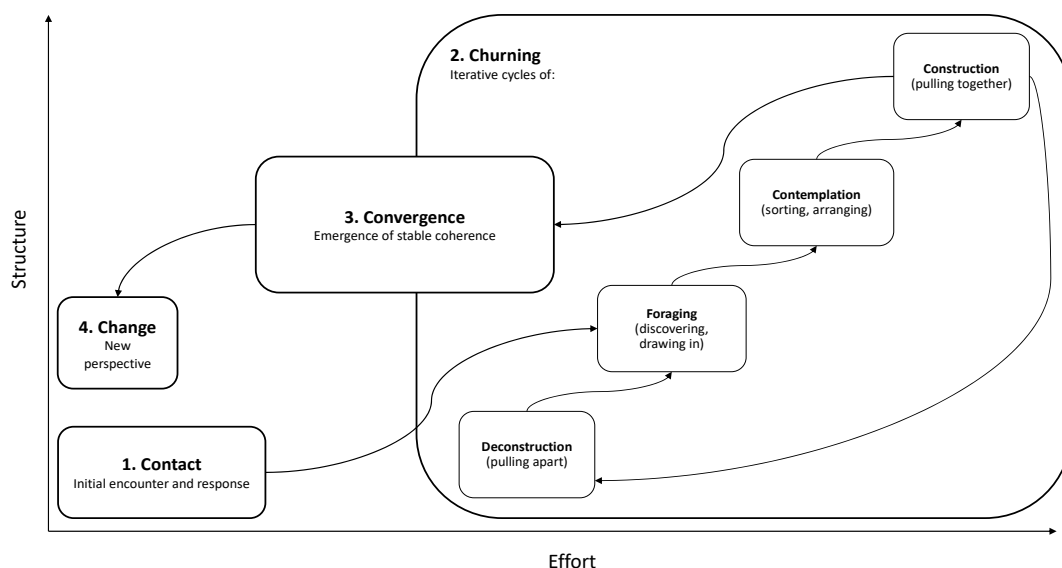


Fig. 2

Sense-making process in Participatory Narrative Inquiry

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The sense-making process in PNI includes the dual dimensions of examining individual perceptions and the interchange of multiple perspectives, known as intersubjectivity (Cooper-White, 2014). This feature differentiates PNI from IPA, which is distinguished by its commitment to the detailed analysis of personal experience such that each individual case is present in the reporting (Smith, 2017). PNI, by comparison, focuses more on shared sense-making of patterns *across* individual stories. Therefore, the methods selected are designed to facilitate dialogue and the creation of collectively constructed artefacts to develop a shared understanding of the problems and possibilities that emerge. It is through this process that the development of knowledge is socially constructed, as “it is in the hearing of others’ stories that we can metaphorically lay our stories alongside another’s, seeking resonances and reverberations that help us imagine who we might become” (Clandinin & Raymond, 2006, p. 103). Holman Jones (2016) notes that stories provide a unique window into understanding the experiences of others, particularly those who are different from us. She positions story sharing as a doorway to understanding, demonstrating that creating a place for multiple stories to be heard allows a more nuanced and complex understanding than interpreting a single story.

The final essential phase of the PNI methodology is known as *return*, where the insights gathered from the project return to the community to expand collective discourse. Stories of the project will return to the community whether or not the return phase is supported; therefore, the focus of this phase is on nurturing the process to support future actions. The return process may be considered in how insights are storied for the community. For example, methods may range from an interactive presentation after the project, to more embodied practices that engage the

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community in further sense-making and story-sharing, such as a physical or virtual exhibition. The return phase can enhance the impact of a PNI project by creating a common language, providing space for people to process the project's outcomes, and protecting against the possible negative implications of an abrupt withdrawal of participation (Kurtz, 2014). The return phase can also gather feedback to enhance research practice and guide future projects.

Table 1

Illustration of Participatory Narrative Inquiry Essential Phases, including Underlying Principles, Data Collection and Interpretation Methods

| Phase | Underlying principles | Data collection methods | Data interpretation methods | Illustration (Zucchini et al., 2022) |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Phase 1: Story Collection | This phase is designed to capture stories of lived experience around a particular point of inquiry. Stories can be collected individually or through group methods. An essential principle of this phase is to include methods that explore what the story means to the individual participant, identifying their underlying feelings, beliefs, and interpretations. | Individual interviews Journals or diaries Surveys Narrative incident reports Group interviews Facilitated group story-sharing sessions | Questions are used to explore what the story means to the participant | <i>Inquiry:</i> How is women empowerment facilitated through an international development program? <i>Data Collection Method:</i> Individual interviews using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) techniques, collecting 563 stories of experience with participants' responses to 10 interpretative questions about that experience. These included exploring woman's feelings during the event, the importance of the story for her, the reaction of the men in the household, and the factors that influenced the conclusion of the story. These interpretative questions were used to group stories according to form, function, and phenomenon. <i>Story elicitation:</i> The story prompt was designed to tap into 3 key elements of storytelling: participants' experience, how they felt, and their perspective of the experience. The story prompt was "Looking back at the last five years, do you remember a decision in your household that was important to you? How did it happen? What was the impact on your household?" |
| Phase 2: Catalysis | This supplementary phase is designed to highlight patterns and trends across the story set to catalyse participants' interpretations. One of the defining principles of this phase is that | N/A | Mixed methods techniques are used to identify patterns across the story-set, which are presented to participants to guide sense-making | <i>Data Interpretation Method:</i> Given the size of the story set, the research team first engaged in a series of mixed-methods interpretations of the data to create catalysis for participants' sense-making. This included creating visual representations of some of the trends in the story set and self-interpretations. |

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| Phase | Underlying principles | Data collection methods | Data interpretation methods | Illustration (Zucchini et al., 2022) |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>patterns are not presented as a researcher-led 'analysis' of results but rather used to enhance group sense-making.</p> | | | |
| <p>Phase 3: Sense-Making</p> | <p>The underlying principle of this phase is to use a series of methods that foster iterative cycles of foraging and sense-making loops to uncover insights with participants. Methods are designed to familiarise participants with the story sets, research purpose and each other to build a collaborative alliance between researchers and participants (co-researchers). Processes are then designed to guide co-researchers through interpretative methods of deconstruction, contemplation,</p> | <p>Records and artefacts from facilitated sense-making workshops</p> | <p>Researchers and participants work with stories collected in Phase 1 in iterative sense-making processes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - deconstruction of story elements - iterative review of stories to discover underlying feelings, beliefs, values - contemplation of themes - construction of artefacts to represent an emerging understanding of themes - identification of convergence of data that supports new insights | <p><i>Data Collection Method:</i> Key informative interview (KII) with program stakeholders, focus groups with local experts and a sub-group of participants <i>Data Interpretation Method:</i> The trends identified in the catalysis phase were discussed with experts and groups of participants to kick off a re-reading and discussion of a selection of representative stories. This approach made it possible to deconstruct key elements in the stories, contemplating areas of impact. Hypotheses were discussed with participants which led to the construction of a theory of change based on the convergence of data illuminating the realities experienced by the targeted population group.</p> |

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| Phase | Underlying principles | Data collection methods | Data interpretation methods | Illustration (Zucchini et al., 2022) |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------|---|--|
| | construction, and convergence of new insights from the stories. | | | |
| Phase 3: Return | The underlying principle of the final phase is to provide methods through which insights can be returned to the community for action. This may include recommendations to enhance theory and/or practice. | N/A | Communication of central themes to guide future action or further inquiry | <i>Data Interpretation Method:</i> The researcher worked with participant analyses to create a theory of change (ToC) of the impact of the program on the empowerment of women, providing useful insights to guide future practice and theoretical frameworks. |

4.3.2. Supplementary phases: Planning, catalysis, and intervention

A PNI project may be supplemented by up to three additional phases: *planning*, *catalysis* and *intervention*. These are depicted in Figure 3 below. These supplementary phases complement the core aspects of the methodology, enabling flexibility in the degree of complexity that can be addressed within the project scope and available resourcing.

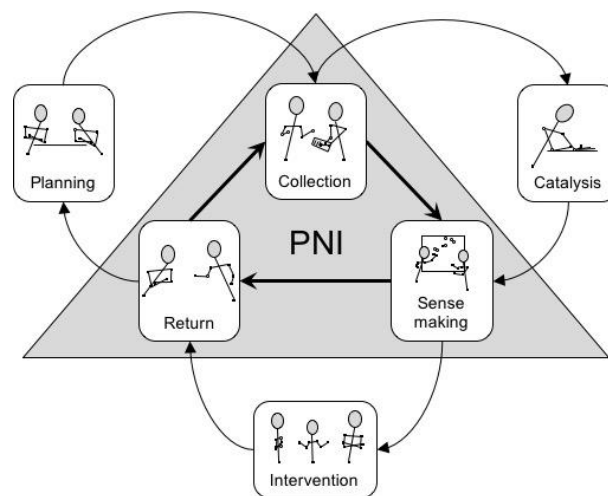


Fig. 3

Essential and optional phases of Participatory Narrative Inquiry. Image used with permission from Kurtz (2014).

The *planning* phase incorporates participants' voices in the project's design, for example, by piloting and refining the story collection process. The *catalysis* phase is instrumental when projects generate a large volume of stories, as mixed methods may be used to highlight patterns and potential interpretations to aid participants in the sense-making process. The language used here is worthy of note to differentiate *catalysis* from *analysis*. That is, the methods used in this phase are designed to catalyse ideas and interpretations from the participants rather than provide a

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reductionistic analysis by the researcher. For example, a PNI researcher/facilitator provides multiple interpretations from different perspectives to provide food for thought in the sense-making process. Finally, a narrative *intervention*, using one of a variety of other story-work approaches, such as participatory theatre or narrative therapy, may aid in exploring collective dialogue to support the return phase.

4.4. Ethical Considerations and Implications

Although stories are used in everyday language and are a natural way in which we make sense of our experiences, some conditions influence how we share stories that can impact the trustworthiness of the data and participants' experience. Therefore, researchers must consider the environment they are co-creating, using reflexive processes to ensure they do no harm and facilitate a space of trust for participants to safely explore their experiences (Buchanan & Warwick, 2021). For example, providing transparency throughout the project empowers participants by allowing them to see and understand how their stories may be used. It is also essential to identify the boundaries of confidentiality, creating ethical expectations and ensuring that participants have informed consent and autonomy, not only over the stories they tell, but over the stories that are told about them. Careful attention must be paid to power dynamics, with the researcher/facilitator considering how they create conditions to mediate potential imbalances. An invitational rather than directive approach can support this goal, demonstrating respectful curiosity about participants' expertise and experience.

It is also imperative to consider how to navigate the collaboration between participant and researcher interpretations. There have been critiques of deliberative methods in participatory research in which the traditional role of the qualitative

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researcher to support the synthesis and interpretation of data has been removed. For example, Evans and Kotchetkova (2009) have demonstrated the potential risks of loss of contribution to theoretical and empirical knowledge when researchers become overly preoccupied with the empowerment of participants to the exclusion of participating in the interpretative process. There is an inherent tension between empowering participants by prioritising their interpretations and helping participants deepen their explorations with help from knowledgeable subject matter experts. We believe it is the researcher's responsibility to create an environment that actively positions participants as co-researchers while ensuring that the researcher's complementary expertise neither sets up a power imbalance nor fails to provide useful support.

PNI has been used across a diverse range of peer-reviewed academic studies, demonstrating its applicability for a broad array of inquiries. These include topics such as teacher wellbeing and professional identity in a complex environment (Holley-Boen, 2018), evaluating international empowerment programs (Zucchini et al., 2022), barriers and enablers that support the realisation of rights of persons with disabilities (Olshanska et al., 2016), and exploring youth identities in Greek migrants (Mallos, 2020). Several doctoral dissertations have also employed the methodology to explore complex topics such as contributors to the wellbeing of mental health workers working in indigenous communities (Seidlikoski Yurach, 2021), or the factors that enable white educators to thrive in diverse urban school settings (DeRemer, 2022). Further, in a study designed to examine the efficacy and feasibility of five different qualitative methods to explore the quality of care relationships in long-term care settings, PNI was

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rated as one of the best approaches for a variety of different patient groups (Scheffelaar et al., 2020), attesting to its relevance in exploring complex experiences.

As the field of positive psychology matures, we are at a crossroads. A diverse range of research methodologies are needed to ensure that growth can continue towards our core purpose of understanding the complex dynamics that enable individuals and communities to flourish. We argue that including methodologies such as PNI in the wellbeing research toolkit can support that growth, addressing limitations posed by the overemphasis on positivism to date. PNI provides a process through which experience can be explored in context, facilitating explorations that can advance the development of contextually relevant theories and practices. Positive psychology was founded on the belief that rigorous (translated as quantitative) methods were needed to advance the scientific discovery and development of theories of wellbeing. However, it could be argued that this narrow perspective of research rigour has limited theoretical development in the field, with generalisations that are built on acontextual, cross-sectional study designs, and a lack of process or appropriate methods to examine complex dynamics of human behaviour (Diener et al., 2022).

Some will argue that stories pose the same limitations as self-report data. However, self-report measures are typically de-contextualised, and thus are at risk of response biases due to a lack of grounding in culturally specific ways of knowing (Christopher, 2014). Stories, by comparison, are contextually bound by their very nature. In fact, it is the subjective nature of the story that illuminates its rich complexities, layered with the symbolic meaning of the individual, and provides relevant insights (Phillips & Bunda, 2018). The purpose of storying is not to uncover 'objective truth' but rather to discover 'locally situated truths' (Phillips & Bunda, 2018).

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Working with stories heeds the call to engage in more phenomenological work needed to advance the field (van Zyl et al., 2023), not as an alternative but as a complement to the current well-established approaches.

PNI complements other narrative and phenomenological methodologies that enable idiographic explorations of experience. However, it offers alternative benefits derived through the participatory and interdisciplinary underlying principles. The PNI methods deliberately and intentionally integrate different ways of knowing, and thus provide the potential to uncover generative insights that may not be possible from a mono-disciplinary perspective (Wissing, 2021). Empowering participants as co-researchers creates a more inclusive research culture, unlocking the benefits of co-creating meaning between scientists and the societies we seek to serve (van Breda & Swilling, 2018). These benefits are supported by three core elements of the PNI approach: 1) improved rigour and quality through combining participants' real-world knowledge and experience with researchers' expertise in facilitating meaning-making; 2) methods that integrate different perspectives, allowing the development of unique insights; and 3) returning insights to the community for action or further investigation, creating the opportunity for a virtuous cycle of theory development. This shared leadership in research provides the opportunity for meaningful transformation in the scientific advancement of the field and in the individuals who contribute to this endeavour. In doing so, it creates a pathway for a more democratised perspective of wellbeing, as suggested by Alexandrova and Fabian (2022)

The social constructionist principles underpinning PNI create a process where a plurality of perspectives can be heard, allowing participants to gain new insights and see the relationship between their interests and others in a new way (Evans &

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Kotchetkova, 2009). Reason and Torbert (2001) suggest that such approaches provide the opportunity to “contribute directly to the flourishing of human persons, their communities, and the ecosystems of which they are part” (p. 6). Supporting this contention from a theoretical lens, the PNI approach may facilitate the basic nutriments for flourishing by supporting participants’ basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It does this by facilitating autonomy throughout the research cycle, enabling the development of competence through the sense-making process, and, perhaps most importantly, creating a sense of relatedness among participants, between participants and researchers, and among the entire community.

It is our hope that in expanding our research horizons to include methodologies such as PNI we may address some of the constraints inherent in the dominant positivist narrative while creating the opportunity to build wellbeing whilst researching wellbeing. After all, what better way to advance the field of positive psychology than to apply our science to our scientific processes?

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Having identified several limitations in our dominant theory of hope, and the need to expand our methodological approaches to address these gaps, the purpose of this chapter is to provide the rationale for the chosen research methodology and study design for the empirical work to further these aims. The chapter begins by exploring the underlying assumptions of the research design and reasoning for the methodology selected for this inquiry. A brief synopsis of the key aspects of the methodology are articulated, building upon the previous chapter, to provide context to the overview of the research design. Data collection and interpretation methods are explored, arguing the case for their selection to support the inquiry. Finally, a summary of the study design is outlined, explaining how it was designed to advance this thesis's central aims and research questions.

5.1. Exploring the roots of the chosen approach

A fundamental aspect of storytelling is exploring the underlying roots of the story being told. This exploration may happen at various points throughout the process of storying, weaving in and out a deepening understanding of what has influenced the story to date, and how this may transform over time. At times this may be overt and explicit, and at other times more implicit, inviting the reader to actively participate in making sense of the story. Indeed, this is the approach I have taken in storying this dissertation. At this juncture in the story of this thesis, it is relevant to explicate some of the underlying background that guided the choice of methodology for the empirical contribution. In this chapter, I outline the philosophical assumptions around ontology (theory of reality), epistemology (theory of knowledge or how we can know reality), and axiology (values as a researcher) (Creswell, 2013) that influenced the methodology

chosen. I further provide an overview of the study design and how the three phases enabled an interconnected examination of the research questions.

5.1.1. Locating this research within a particular paradigm

In response to the limitations of the prevailing hope theory research conducted within a positivist paradigm outlined in Chapter 3, this research sought to expand the meta-theoretical perspective to enable a systems exploration of hope theory. From an ontological perspective, one of the underlying principles of a systems approach is the assumption that there are different views of reality depending upon our position within a system (Hieronymi, 2013; Meadows, 2008). In exploring the assumptions of different epistemologies that would best allow the different perspectives within this research story to be told, it became clear that a singular epistemology was insufficient. Rather, different views of reality would assist in building a more holistic picture of how hope emerges in young people. Taking a dynamic systems lens to examine this core aim positions this research within a social constructionist epistemology, sometimes called an interpretivist approach, that leads a researcher to look for complexity of views and adopt an inductive approach to theory development (Creswell, 2013). While a social constructionist epistemology provides a solid framework to prioritise the subjective and varied experiences of participants, holding that knowledge is constructed in interactions with others (Creswell, 2013), it has also been argued that this is insufficient in advocating for action to improve society (Mertens, 2003).

Transformative epistemologies that inform methodologies such as participatory action research, move beyond an interpretivist lens to collaborate with participants to bring about such changes in practice (Creswell, 2013). Positioning the research within a transformative epistemology allows the researcher to collaborate with participants to

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co-create knowledge and shared understanding. In doing so, both the participants and researcher may experience transformation, but importantly, they can advocate for practical outcomes and recommendations that may create sustainable change in their community (Senge & Scharmer, 2001). Therefore, I position this empirical study in the liminal space between a social constructionist and transformative epistemology.

Incorporating a transformative approach allowed me to address one of the driving purposes behind this research program, as outlined in Chapter 2, to begin to address the substantial lack of hope in young people. However, it is relevant to note that a transformative approach is typically driven by focusing on marginalised populations (Jackson et al., 2018). This empirical study does not argue or explore power differentials that may position university students as marginalised. Instead, I contend that their voices have not been present as active collaborators in hope research to date and thus the relevance of this dual approach to designing a study that prioritises student perspectives.

In educational research, it is not uncommon to be more eclectic and draw from various disciplines to inform the methodology (Creswell, 2013), with some positioning this as an epistemology in its own right, namely a pragmatist approach (Maxcy, 2003). For those who prefer to locate the research within a specific epistemology, this may be a helpful way to consider this thesis; however, the assumptions outlined above from both a social constructionist and transformative lens play a lead role in directing the methodology for this inquiry.

5.1.2. Reflecting on the influences of my values as a researcher

This story cannot help but be influenced by the origins of my values as a researcher. At a subconscious level, this is influenced by my ancestral Irish roots and

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the inherent cultural norms of storytelling represented by the Seanchaí as traditional storytellers and cultural custodians. These values are also influenced by the ancestral storytelling traditions of the Wurundjeri people, the indigenous custodians of the lands on which I live and work (Naarm, now known as Melbourne, Australia). I have been privileged to work with indigenous colleagues who have shared the power of storying in the development of knowledge systems, which has had a significant impact on my development as a researcher. I value the inherent complexity and nuance evident in stories that help us make sense of the world.

These values have significantly influenced the decision to use storying as both methods and overarching methodology (method/ology) in this project, particularly as it facilitates a decolonised approach to foregrounding the experience and interpretation of the participants themselves. Importantly, I position myself within this approach as a facilitator of both story collection and sense-making *with* participants rather than as an interpreter *for* participants. My background as an educator, using storying to make sense of complexity and as a method/ology to empower communities to action, also contributed to grounding this research in social constructionist and transformative epistemology.

Phillips and Bunda (2018) locate five principles of researching through, with, and as storying methodologies that reflect both my values and experience in utilising storying method/ologies. These include a) storying nourishes thought, body, and soul; b) storying is embodied relational meaning-making; c) storying intersects past and present as living oral archives; d) storying claims voice in the silenced margins; and e) storying enacts collective ownership and authorship. These principles of storying methodologies facilitate the goals of a social constructionist and transformative

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epistemology. The ontological, epistemological and axiological roots outlined in this section formed the basis for the decision to use Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) (Kurtz, 2014) as the central methodology to address the empirical aims of this research program.

Given the broader aim of this dissertation seeks to refine our theoretical models of hope, Grounded Theory (GT) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was explored as a potential methodology. However, GT is most appropriate when little is known about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), which is not the case for hope. What is less known is how closely the experience of hope for different populations supports the central tenets of Hope Theory, as demonstrated in Chapter 3. Consequently, the empirical study for this dissertation was designed to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges for university students as a first step to advancing this broader aim. It is also worth noting that GT has not traditionally involved the co-construction of theories *with* participants. However, there has been an evolution of GT approaches that move more towards a constructionist philosophy (Chun Tie et al., 2019).

PNI shares some similarities with GT in that theories emerge from the data rather than apriori hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kurtz, 2014). However, the methodology offers additional advantages over GT, such as drawing on mixed methods approaches that integrate dialectical perspectives, enabling new holistic knowledge to emerge (Johnson, 2015). PNI is also a storying methodology and thus offers a more appropriate choice within the paradigm this research is situated within. Further benefits are outlined in the sections below as the rationale for PNI as the overarching methodology is detailed, including the integration of different methods to support the research aims.

5.2. Participatory Narrative Inquiry

Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) is a storytelling research approach that senses patterns in the social system through the analysis of stories, prioritising participants as experts in their own experience (Kurtz, 2014). PNI has its origins in several methodological traditions, including participatory action research, narrative inquiry, and mixed methods research. It provides unique benefits in studying complex phenomena, particularly in wellbeing research. This was explored in further depth in the article “Storying research: Exploring the benefits of Participatory Narrative Inquiry for wellbeing research”, included as Chapter 4 of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge, the methodology has not been used in the hope literature; therefore, this study will be used as a prototype to explore its efficacy as a systems-informed approach to researching hope.

To establish how the PNI methodology enables the empirical aims of the thesis in this chapter, it is relevant to revisit some of the fundamental underlying principles of PNI outlined in Chapter 4. Firstly, PNI methods are designed to elevate diverse perspectives to facilitate a deeper understanding of the nuances of a particular experience. Secondly, participants are considered experts in their own experiences; thus, it is pivotal that the stories are interpreted with the people who told them. Finally, consideration should be given to connecting the stories to communities that can take action (e.g. policy and decision-makers), grounding the research in utility and relevance for participants.

These principles guide the research process in three core phases: *story collection*, participant *sense-making*, and *return* of the analysis to the broader community for action. Supplementary *catalysis* and narrative *intervention* phases can

also support the sense-making and return processes. The methods used to support participant interpretation in PNI draw from an interdisciplinary base, including psychology, systems science, anthropology, and arts. The rationale for selecting methods to support this research project's aims is outlined in section 5.4. However, to contextualise these decisions, I begin by outlining the overarching research design.

5.3. Research design

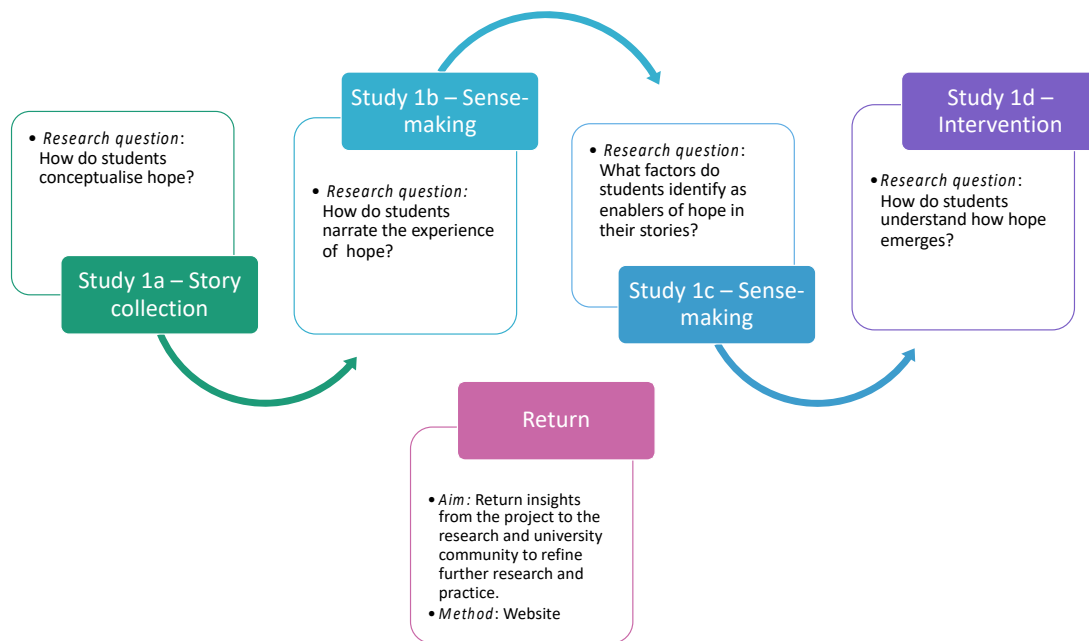
The primary aim of this study was to compare lay to scientific theories of hope to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges for university students. A secondary aim was to explore the utility of this approach to support the ongoing development of theory, research, and practice. These aims were examined through a series of four interrelated research questions:

1. How do students conceptualise hope?
2. How do students narrate the experience of hope?
3. What factors do students identify as enablers of hope in their stories?
4. How do students understand how hope emerges?

These questions are explored in a sequential and contingent research design within the broader flow of PNI methodology. The study design incorporated four data collection points, as illustrated in Figure 7 below:

Figure 7

Research Design Within the Phases of PNI



5.4. Methods

In qualitative research, data generation and interpretation are often intertwined, and thus separating methods of data generation from data interpretation can be a false characterisation of the approach (Oades et al., 2019). This is certainly the case in the responsive and iterative process of PNI, and storying methodologies more broadly, and thus I use the term method here to refer to the integrative system of data collection, generation, and interpretation. This section is designed to help clarify this integrative approach by using sub-headings to describe the sampling and data collection methods, followed by the rationale for this project's data generation and interpretive methods.

5.4.1. Sampling

A purposive sampling method was used to identify cases that would maximise the opportunity for exploring a rich dataset within the limits of the resources available for this project (Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling is designed to recruit participants with experience and knowledge in the specific phenomena of interest based on predetermined criteria relevant to the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The criteria for this project were based on the context of the inquiry, namely the experience of hope for university students and the chosen methodology that requires participant involvement as co-researchers. Therefore, participants were recruited from a large Australian research-intensive university with a competitive academic entrance requirement. Drawing from this population ensured that it could reasonably be expected that participants may be interested in pursuing research activities and possess the linguistic and reflective capabilities to engage in the sense-making process as co-researchers.

The university also attracts a large proportion of international students, between 41% and 47%, from 150 countries during the study period (Times Higher Education, 2023), allowing access to a broader cross-cultural representation. Recruitment focused on two large undergraduate subjects selected for the breadth of representation of students enrolled across a range of study disciplines. The researcher coordinated these subjects, and therefore, it was essential to create ethical protocols in the recruitment process to ensure no potential impact from dependency relationships (see approved ethics application in Appendix A). Students had no direct relationship with the researcher as part of their studies, and the focus groups were conducted after their enrolment in the unit. Over the course of three years, a total of

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2,600 students were invited to participate in the study, with 42 agreeing to contribute. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic can largely explain this low participation rate, as the recruitment waves coincided with multiple lockdowns and an increased strain on students during this period.

5.4.2. Data collection

Students were invited to participate in the project through a direct message on their subject learning management system, sent outside class times. The brief included a short overview of the study, including the expected time commitment, benefits of participation, and assurances of anonymity and freedom of non-participation. The invitation included a link to an online plain language statement (PLS) that informed them about the purpose of the study and the specifics of participation (see Appendix B). The form enabled students to provide informed consent, including independently specifying if they were willing for their data to be used in a database for future studies (see Appendix C). The final page of the form included a link to an anonymous Qualtrix survey to be completed in their own time after providing informed consent.

The survey was developed to capture demographic details, including age, course, year of study, gender and ethnic identity, followed by a series of questions to explore students' conceptualisation and experiences of hope (see Appendix D for details). Protocols from prototype analysis were adapted to design the conceptualisation of hope question, which has been established as an effective method of inquiry into natural language concepts (Fehr & Russell, 1984; Hone et al., 2015). The questions that tapped into students' experience of hope were adapted from protocols of PNI story collection, drawing on the question bank developed by Kurtz (2014). Before commencing the research, these questions were piloted with

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students to ensure the language was appropriate for the sample and effective in eliciting stories of the experience of hope. Minor refinements were made before submitting for ethics approval. Students were invited to indicate on the survey if they were interested in participating in the subsequent focus groups and, if so, to provide contact details for follow-up.

Three focus groups were designed to engage in the sense-making and intervention phases of PNI. Each focus group targeted a specific research question but was developed as a contingent design, building upon the previous session to deepen the inquiry and integrate insights across the study. Fifteen students indicated their interest in participating in these focus groups and were invited to participate through email. The email outlined the opportunity to contribute in up to three workshops as co-researchers, providing a brief overview of the study, benefits of participation, and contribution flexibility. The email also provided a link to an online PLS articulating this study phase's purpose and the involvement specifics, including time commitment (see Appendix B). Students were invited to complete the consent form (see Appendix C) attached to the PLS before the focus group; however, two participants had not yet completed this, and therefore, the first focus group allowed time to revisit a summary of the PLS and completion of informed consent prior to commencing the activities. Of the 15 students who indicated their interest, 3 were ultimately able to commit to engagement in these focus groups and chose to participate in all three sessions. Times were negotiated based on students' availability and were conducted across three months, with four and six weeks between each session.

5.4.3. Data generation and interpretation

In addition to the data generated through the Qualtrix survey, several qualitative methods were incorporated to support further data generation and interpretation in the sense-making and intervention phases of PNI. These methods draw from various research traditions, including arts-informed practices such as image-based representations, qualitative mapping methods used in educational and geographic research, and systems thinking through rich-picture maps. Additionally, thematic analysis was utilised to interpret participants' conceptualisations of hope.

5.4.3.1. Arts-informed methods: Image-based modes of representation.

Images, like stories, tap into methods used in everyday life as we create, interpret and use images, often without conscious attention (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Images can be used to express complex human experiences, highlighting both concrete and abstract concepts in an economical manner, making them an excellent source of data generation and interpretation to support academic knowledge production (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Knowles & Cole, 2008). Arts-informed methods, such as image-based modes of representation, can complement qualitative analysis by drawing on aesthetic ways of knowing, best understood as emotional, perceptual and sense-based forms of knowledge (Archibald & Gerber, 2018; Douglas & Carless, 2018).

Incorporating these methods enables awareness and new ways of understanding that can tap into preverbal sensory and emotional knowledge that may not be facilitated through language-based methods of investigation (Archibald & Gerber, 2018; Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Knowles & Cole, 2008).

In PNI, seeking methods that can facilitate participant reflexivity is also imperative to deepening interpretations, and arts-informed methods can support this

objective (Archibald & Gerber, 2018). Drawing on methods that illuminate evidence and understanding of aspects that can often not be seen is particularly important in psychological research that investigates latent constructs (Douglas & Carless, 2018). Through the use of metaphor and symbolism, visual images can communicate underlying theories effectively and eloquently (Knowles & Cole, 2008). They allow the capacity to simultaneously view the whole and interrelationships between the parts, which makes their use an ideal method for the complex dynamic nature of this investigation.

These methods can be used to both support analysis and communication (Archibald & Gerber, 2018), as they draw from techniques and knowledge that are accessible and useful beyond academia (Johnson, 2015). In fact, Knowles and Cole (2008) argue that “the possibilities for using the visual to make effective and economical theoretical statements is, for the most part, dismally undertapped and undervalued in the humanities and social sciences” (p.8). These features informed the decision to include these methods to facilitate both the sense-making and intervention phases of PNI.

5.4.3.2. Qualitative mapping methods: Thematic mapping. Mapping has been used across a broad range of research approaches, with origins in psychology, focusing on human perceptions, and critical geography, exploring human relationships with geographic spaces (Marx, 2022). The use of mapping in educational and social science research has grown substantially in the last decade and is a valuable technique for participatory research, enabling the exploration of relationships, processes and experiences in a geographical space (Marx, 2022; Sato et al., 2014). The inclusion of mapping techniques was designed to address some of the limitations of dominant

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methods in the extant hope literature. We have already discussed in Chapter 4 how storying as method/ology addresses some of these limitations by providing insights across time and within context. Mapping techniques also allow the investigation of this story data across a spatial landscape. The inclusion of this method facilitates an exploration of the enablers of hope beyond the individual cognitive lens, providing a technique that allows participants to map enablers onto a socio-spatial landscape. Utilising such an approach can provide valuable insights into designing future practices by ascertaining insights into the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and socio-cultural influences on hope.

Maps are a useful method to support sense-making, particularly in facilitating reflexive practice and interpretations, as they can help participants organise their thoughts and create understanding through storying that is not limited by language or writing skills (Annamma, 2017; Marx, 2022). In addition to their use to facilitate meaning-making in focus groups, thematic mapping methods can also be used as an artefact of research. Thus, they can support research translation by sharing insights in a modality more accessible to a broader audience than academic journals (Marx, 2022). This dual use makes them an effective method to support both the sense-making and intervention phases of PNI. The richness of stories that can be shared through this method and the empowerment of participants as knowledge creators are strengths of this method. However, consideration must be given to building an environment of trust, respect, and care with participants to facilitate this safely (Ademolu, 2022; Paris & Winn, 2014; Rizvi, 2017).

5.4.3.3. Systems thinking methods: Rich picture mapping. Given the dynamic systems focus of this inquiry, it was essential to select methods that would allow

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investigation into the dynamic interactions between elements that enable hope to emerge. Systems mapping methods enable such an inquiry and can range from more structured and quantitative approaches, e.g. system dynamic maps, to semi-qualitative, e.g. participatory systems mapping, to free-form qualitative methods, such as rich picture mapping (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022). Free-form qualitative methods place the interpretative power and decision-making in participants' hands (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022), which informed my decision to include rich picture mapping as the method of choice for this aspect of the research inquiry.

Systems thinker Peter Checkland first conceptualised rich picture mapping as part of his Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland, 2000). Soft systems methods (SSM) such as rich picture mapping are grounded in the same epistemology as participatory research, creating a process to facilitate shared insights and dialogue to support problem-solving (Bell & Morse, 2013). A rich picture map uses simple diagrams and visual metaphors to express meaning, allowing interactions and patterns across a complex system to be identified (Bell et al., 2016; Bell & Morse, 2013; Conte & Davidson, 2020). The flexibility of rich picture maps is one of their inherent strengths, making them relevant to a range of inquiries and participant backgrounds and abilities (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022).

The integration of pictorial mapping diagrams as a sense-making tool has a long and rich history with benefits aligned with visual images and mapping methods outlined in the previous sections. In addition to these benefits, the value of rich picture maps lies not in their objective representation of reality but rather as a technique that can prompt systems thinking, surfacing mental models and identification of interconnected relationships that can generate new insights (Bell & Morse, 2013;

Conte & Davidson, 2020). Drawing a rich picture map invokes a process of iterative thinking, understanding and refining understanding through the creation of the map (Fathulla, 2008; Monk & Howard, 1998). Rich picture maps can be used throughout an inquiry process to engage participants in sense-making and/or as a research output to engage key stakeholders in a reflexive process on the insights from the research (Bell & Morse, 2013; Conte & Davidson, 2020). These features support their use in both the sense-making and intervention phases of the PNI methodology.

5.4.3.4. Thematic analysis. This study also collected data that sat outside the traditional PNI approach, in the form of students' definitions and indicators of the concept of hope. Thematic analysis (TA) was selected as the best method to analyse this data, as one of three approaches Riessman (2008) recommends for narrative research analysis. While these were not narratives in and of themselves, they were generated in a narrative research design. Therefore, selecting this method allowed the researcher to identify themes 'told' by the participants in their conceptualisations of hope (Riessman, 2008). Thematic analysis, a method for identifying and analysing patterns across a dataset, can be used within different meta-theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The way TA was used in this research sits more within an essentialist paradigm that suggests that we can interpret meaning from the language used by participants rather than a social constructionist or transformational paradigm. However, Holloway and Todres (2003) suggest that such tensions can be transcended to ensure coherence by providing a clear rationale for the method in the context of the research inquiry. They argue that 'thematizing meanings' is one of only a few generic skills shared across a broad range of qualitative research approaches. While boundaries are often blurred within qualitative approaches (Holloway & Todres, 2003),

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I have sought to engender a reflexive position to create a boundary between this analysis and the co-constructed interpretations with participants in the PNI methodology to engender greater coherence.

Thematic analysis approaches vary and may be clustered around three broad areas, including 'coding reliability', a more neopositivist approach that focuses on objective coding, 'codebook' methods where a structured coding framework is used for analysis, and 'reflexive' approaches where analysis can be either inductive or deductive but is generated through a reflexive interpretive process (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I have used the latter, drawing on reflexive thematic analysis protocols (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to explore themes in students' conceptualisations of hope. One of the strengths of TA is its flexibility while ensuring that it is embedded in theory (Braun et al., 2019). This made the method an appropriate choice for this inquiry, which was designed to examine how well the data mapped to existing theories of hope, including illuminating themes that may not currently be represented in these theoretical frameworks.

5.5. Study design

As outlined in section 5.3, the research design incorporated an integrated series of four studies that are situated within the broader PNI phases of story collection, sense-making, intervention, and return. The sections below detail the design of each study, including how they address the identified gaps in the research.

5.5.1. Study 1a: *How do students conceptualise hope?*

Study 1a was designed to facilitate the story-collection phase of PNI and address the first research question exploring how students conceptualise hope. Data was collected using an anonymous Qualtrix survey. Of the 42 students recruited, 8

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withdrew after completing the demographic details, leaving a total sample of 34 for the first inquiry. The first question in this survey was designed to enable students to begin with their definition of the abstract concept of hope to provide a context to their stories of the lived experience. In addition to providing a process to support students in grounding their experiences of hope, this also enabled a comparison of lay conceptualisations of hope to existing academic models. The data from this first question was analysed separately, using content and thematic analysis, to ensure integrity with the PNI approach defined by its use of narrative data, as outlined in Chapter 4. This analysis allowed a baseline to ground the subsequent inquiries in the participants' conceptualisations of hope. Ten students did not complete the remaining questions in the survey, resulting in a total pool of 24 stories for interpretation in Studies 1b to 1d.

5.5.2. Study 1b: How do students narrate their experience of hope?

The second study was designed to explore how students experience hope, drawing on the 24 stories and participant responses collected in Study 1a. Three students participated as co-researchers in a focus group to explore this question through a series of sense-making activities facilitated by the researcher (see Appendix E for the complete protocol for the workshop). These activities included generating themes across the story dataset and producing image-based representations of the experience of hope. These methods allowed an examination of whether the lived experience of hope supported the two-factor model proposed by Snyder et al. (1991), or whether there was evidence of additional interpersonal and intrapersonal factors as proposed in Chapter Three.

5.5.3. Study 1c: What factors do students identify as enablers of hope in their stories?

Having established the basis of the experience of hope for our participants, Study 1c was designed to explore the factors students identified as enablers of hope in their stories through a sense-making focus group. While the original protocol included methods to explore the dynamic interactions between these factors, there was insufficient time to complete this, and therefore, this was explored in Study 1d. Participants engaged in various sense-making methods to explore this data, including identifying the enablers of hope across the story data set and then mapping the stories onto a systems landscape to elucidate the core factors that enable hope to emerge. These methods were designed to examine the dynamic experience of hope, testing whether this was predominantly experienced as a cognitive process in alignment with the theoretical propositions of Snyder's (1991) hope theory, or indeed moving beyond this to an affective, embodied and/or relational experience of hope. That is, is there evidence to warrant an expansion beyond the current individualistic cognitive theory of hope to a more systems understanding, both of the self as a system and within systems?

5.5.4. Study 1d: How do students understand how hope emerges?

While Study 1d was initially designed to focus only on designing the return phase of PNI, the adaptive design resulted in an additional sense-making activity being included in this session. This refined approach resulted in a richer design than initially planned, as it enabled the final sense-making activity to draw together the insights from the entire study design. As outlined in Chapter 4, a core part of the PNI methodology is to consider how stories and insights are returned to the broader

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community for action. This may be supplemented by interventions that help tell the story of the project to foster effective decision-making and future action (Kurtz, 2014).

As a result of the iterative design, this final sense-making activity became a form of intervention in considering how to share the broader insights from the overarching study with the community.

The workshop began by sharing data visualisations from studies 1a to 1c to catalyse participants' sense-making. Participants were invited to identify their own trends and patterns in the data before creating rich picture maps to represent how factors interact to enable an experience of hope based on the collective story data. Utilising rich picture maps was incorporated to address the limitations outlined in Chapter Three regarding the impact of factorial operationalisation of hope in the extant psychological literature. This method examined participants' lay theories of how hope emerges, moving beyond identifying the eliciting factors to a deeper understanding of the interconnections between elements that enable the emergent experience of hope.

Study 1d also enabled the co-researchers and myself to co-design how the data could be shared with the broader community through the development of a research website that can also be used to collect a larger dataset for future studies. The inclusion of this phase provides a crucial link between this empirical study and the broader aim to refine our theories of how hope emerges to better direct future practices. A series of questions were also posed to explore the experience of the methodology from the participants' perspective to foster an examination of the methodological contribution of using PNI in wellbeing research.

CHAPTER SIX: STORIES OF HOPE: A MULTI-PHASE EMPIRICAL STUDY

This chapter is a manuscript that has been submitted to Qualitative Psychology. It forms the empirical work of this thesis investigating the use of a new methodology to hope research, Participatory Narrative Inquiry, to explore lay conceptualisations and theories of how hope emerges in young adults in a university context. The manuscript builds a rationale for the need to compare lay theories to existing scientific theories to progress the field of hope research. The multi-phased qualitative study is described, integrating analyses from the researcher and student co-researchers. Results are compared to existing scientific theories to provide evidence of support for some of the theoretical tenets, as well as gaps that indicate the need for further refinement of these theories. The implications of these findings are discussed, providing recommendations to reconceptualise a systems theory of hope.

Stories of hope: A participatory narrative inquiry into integrated theories of hope for
young adults

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Abstract

A growing body of literature on lay conceptualisations of hope has demonstrated that while there is support for some of the central tenets of the dominant psychological theory of hope, there are several elements that are not represented in this theory. However, most of the research to date has focused on lay definitions or beliefs about the abstract concept of hope rather than an exploration of hope experiences, which may provide a richer source of data to compare to and test scientific theories. This research addresses this gap using a participatory narrative inquiry into lay conceptualisations and theories of how hope emerges in 34 young adults in a university context. Results are interpreted through Snyder's hope theory, as well as recent theoretical and empirical advancements of this model, to provide evidence of support and opportunities for further refinement of existing theoretical models. Using a multi-phased qualitative design, with a blend of researcher interpretation alongside participant interpretations, this study drew on multi-methods of analysis to create an integrated picture of how hope emerges for these participants. Results provided emerging evidence for a systems reconceptualisation of hope, with students experiencing hope through a dynamic interplay of cognitive, affective, behavioural, and interpersonal factors. Moreover, these factors were impacted by broader socio-cultural and political systems. We discuss the implications of the gaps between lay and scientific theories of hope and provide recommendations for future directions in refining existing theoretical models.

6.1. Introduction

Hope is a ubiquitous construct in wellbeing research, capturing the attention of scientists across a broad range of academic disciplines. It is not just in science that this construct resonates, as a simple review of literature, art, or lay language demonstrates the timeless prevalence of hope as a fundamental human experience. Yet despite the universality of interest in hope, it is worth asking if we are talking about the same concept. This matters when it comes to designing interventions and assessing outcomes based on a theoretical understanding of a concept, as the question of relevance becomes, 'Whose theory takes primacy in the design of these approaches - a particular scientist's theory, or the population we are seeking to support?'

Of course, this is not a simple either-or question. Scholars distinguish three types of theory that are relevant to consider when examining a concept: *scientific theories* derived through observation and empirically tested; idiographic personal theories, often termed *lay theories*; and *folk theories* which are shared by a particular subgroup (Furnham et al., 2001). When scientists redefine an everyday concept in ways that substantially deviate from people's typical understanding, this can lead to misunderstanding when research is translated (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). For example, do emerging adults define hope in the same way that it has been conceptualised in psychological literature? Further, when we are interested in constructs that are well-established 'folk concepts', it is important to discern how a population conceptualise the particular phenomenon, as this allows research and suggested practices to be contextualised to that population (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Malle & Knobe, 2001; Serle, 1995). Such contextualising may increase the efficacy of practices. This is particularly relevant for hope, given a meta-analysis has revealed small effect sizes in

intervention studies based on the dominant psychological theory of hope (Weis & Speridakos, 2011).

Language is a powerful mechanism for communicating ideas and creating shared understanding across different audiences. Perhaps this is best illustrated by Wittgenstein's (1953) famous quote: "the meaning of a word is in its use in the language" (p.43). Social constructionist scholars pose that language is not only used to describe concepts but as a communication system that is used to process ideas both intrapersonally and interpersonally (Burr, 2015). In fact, the role of language in shaping the psychosocial realm is well evidenced across cultures and contexts (Brooks et al., 2017; Sivak et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2020). Not only does language help communicate our understanding of a particular construct, but language also influences or constructs our experience, that is we understand experiences through language (Brothers, 2005). Therefore, not only is it imperative to discern the language that populations use around hope, but this language may also be used as a lever for making shifts in the experience of hope.

6.1.1. *Scientific and Lay Conceptualisations of Hope*

So, what do we know about the language that has been used to communicate both scientific and lay understandings of hope? Snyder's (1989, 1991, 2002) two-factor conceptualisation of hope has dominated the scientific understanding in psychology in the last 30 years. Conceptualised as a set of cognitive processes in relation to a desired goal, hope is theorised to emerge from the reciprocal and iterative relationship between agency (goal-directed determination) and pathways (goal-directed planning) thinking. Snyder also described this interaction as the experience of hope itself (Tong et al., 2010). Snyder's model exemplifies top-down theory development, although it

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was seeded by his empirical observations in reality negotiation research (Snyder, 1989). The theory was originally developed as a dispositional construct that represents the development of specific appraisals over the lifespan. These appraisals are postulated to influence one's self-theory, reflected in specific thinking styles that lead to hope (Snyder, 1989).

The prevalence and impact of this theory across the academic literature is well evidenced (Colla et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2022), and yet when the theoretical propositions are tested against lay conceptualisations from different populations, the results are mixed. For example, Feldman et al. (2022) demonstrated that healthcare professionals' conceptualisation of hope was more representative of agency thinking with less evidence of pathways thinking. This result was aligned with Tong et al. (2010) findings that both trait and state agency, but not pathways thinking, were predictive of conceptualisations of hope in undergraduate students in both America and Singapore. These two studies took a directive approach to test the central tenets of Snyder's theory to lay conceptualisations by using a pre-determined coding scheme (Feldman et al., 2022) or measuring hope using Snyder's scales (Tong et al., 2010); however, the results vary more when a grounded approach is taken.

Luo et al. (2022) conducted a prototype analysis of lay conceptualisations of hope across a range of studies with adult citizens from the USA and UK, and Dutch and Australian undergraduate students. Prototype analysis is a bottom-up approach that has demonstrated efficacy in analysing natural language categories like hope (Bharara et al., 2019). The method has participants identify features associated with a particular concept and then empirically test the importance of those features to ascertain a prototypical structure (Fehr & Russell, 1984). Luo et al.'s findings indicated that while

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'goals and plans' and 'motivation' emerged as important features, supporting the pathways thinking theoretical proposition of Snyder's theory, features that support agency thinking ('individual determination' and 'ability') were not seen as important. Interestingly, none of these features were found to be central to the participants' conceptualisation of hope. Instead, the core features included 'desires', 'possibilities', 'coping with challenges', 'faith or belief', and a sense of 'positivity'. While some of these features align tangentially with Snyder's theory, the results highlight features that are not included and indicate a stronger importance on affective processes than Feldman et al.'s (2022) findings.

It is unsurprising that there may be variations in how different populations conceptualise a concept, given the influence of cultural, contextual, or lifespan development factors. For example, in studies that have examined lay conceptualisations of hope in late adolescence to emerging adulthood, the importance of interpersonal factors surfaces (Eren & Yeşilbursa, 2017; Li et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2021); an element not considered in Snyder's theory. Given the developmental stage of this cohort, this relational influence may be expected. The prevalence of a more affective conceptualisation of hope is also common in student studies (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Li et al., 2021), while healthcare professionals' conceptualisation was more consistent with Snyder's cognitive theory (Feldman et al., 2022).

Of equal interest to differences in understanding of hope, is when a feature emerges as common across different populations, such as the centrality of faith in students both in the US (Li et al., 2021) and Africa (Wilson et al., 2021). Yet the ways in which this is understood and explained in the context of hope varies. In the Ghanaian sample, spiritual factors were associated with forging a sense of agency, whereas the

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US sample simply highlighted a belief in the spiritual nature of hope. This type of nuance is only possible to discern because of the methodology chosen. Most of the studies analysed in this section have taken an abstract approach, typically using deductive content-analysis to code the way these populations define or articulate their associated beliefs about the abstract concept of hope. By comparison, Wilson et al. (2021) conducted in-depth interviews that dug more deeply into the experience of hope. This approach enabled a more nuanced understanding of the ways these features enabled hope – more representative of a lay theory than conceptualisation.

6.1.2. Building a Nuanced Story of Hope for Young Adults

To move beyond an analysis of language that young adults use at the surface level of conceptualisation, to a deeper understanding of their experiences and how they explain the mechanisms that enable hope, we need to explore these experiences in context. A growing movement of contextualist science has demonstrated the value of exploring behaviour in context to better understand the function of particular processes (Hayes et al., 2012; Hayes & Hofmann, 2021; Henriques et al., 2014). To facilitate this type of inquiry we need to broaden our methods of data collection and interpretation to include those that enable an exploration of the experience of hope in context. Storying methods are particularly relevant for this type of exploration.

Stories are a ubiquitous method of understanding experience in context that have been used across cultures and time (Creswell, 2013; Gottschall, 2012; Hutchens, 2015). They are particularly useful in exploring people's lay theories and beliefs about a particular concept, as they are used to make sense of both the causes and consequences of a particular experience, including tracking experience over time (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013). Importantly, stories are a part of our

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everyday language use and thus provide a more naturalistic way of inquiring into lay theories of hope (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Phillips & Bunda, 2018).

Storying methods provide a unique opportunity to explore a more nuanced conceptualisation, allowing a comparison of lay to scientific theories of hope to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges for young people. More often than not, explicit scientific explanations and implicit lay explanations for particular concepts are explored separately, and yet there are unique advantages to advancing knowledge and practice by comparing and contrasting the function, structure, and implications of these together (Furnham, 1988). Such an approach has been used in some of the pivotal theoretical advances in psychology, such as the development of the Big 5 personality (Goldberg, 1993; John et al., 2008). However, of the literature exploring lay conceptualisations of hope to date, only Bruininks and Malle (2005) used stories as part of their method. While they argued for the benefits inherent in exploring the concept of hope embedded in context - specifically in distinguishing this from other concepts such as wishing and wanting - their study did not seek to explore how students explained their experience of hope.

This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring both the language students use to define the abstract concept of hope and a deeper exploration of their theories of how hope emerges in their stories of lived experience. We take a unique approach to this latter aim by using students as co-researchers to elevate their interpretation, differentiating this inquiry from the researcher-led analyses of lay beliefs and theories in the extant literature. Such a participatory approach can yield benefits in bringing together the deep contextual knowledge of participants with the scientific knowledge

of researchers, enabling new insights in this process of collaborative work that can advance theoretical developments (Conte & Davidson, 2020).

6.1.3. *The Current Investigation*

This study is a participatory narrative inquiry into the experience of hope for young adults in a university context. In a multi-phased contingent qualitative design, the study explores a series of related research questions to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges for these emerging adults. The study begins by examining how participants conceptualise hope as an abstract construct, including the language they use in defining hope. This builds on the existing literature, enabling further investigation into how closely this is aligned to the way hope is conceptualised scientifically. Participants' experiences of hope are then explored with a subset of students as co-researchers in a series of participatory sense-making workshops, offering new insights into the way students explain how hope emerges. Finally, student co-researchers helped define how these findings should be shared with the broader community to enhance future research and practice. This study introduces a new methodology to hope research, exploring its efficacy to qualitatively explore complex dynamic interactions and bring together participants and researchers in an endeavour to advance our theoretical and empirical knowledge.

6.2. Methods

6.2.1. *Study design*

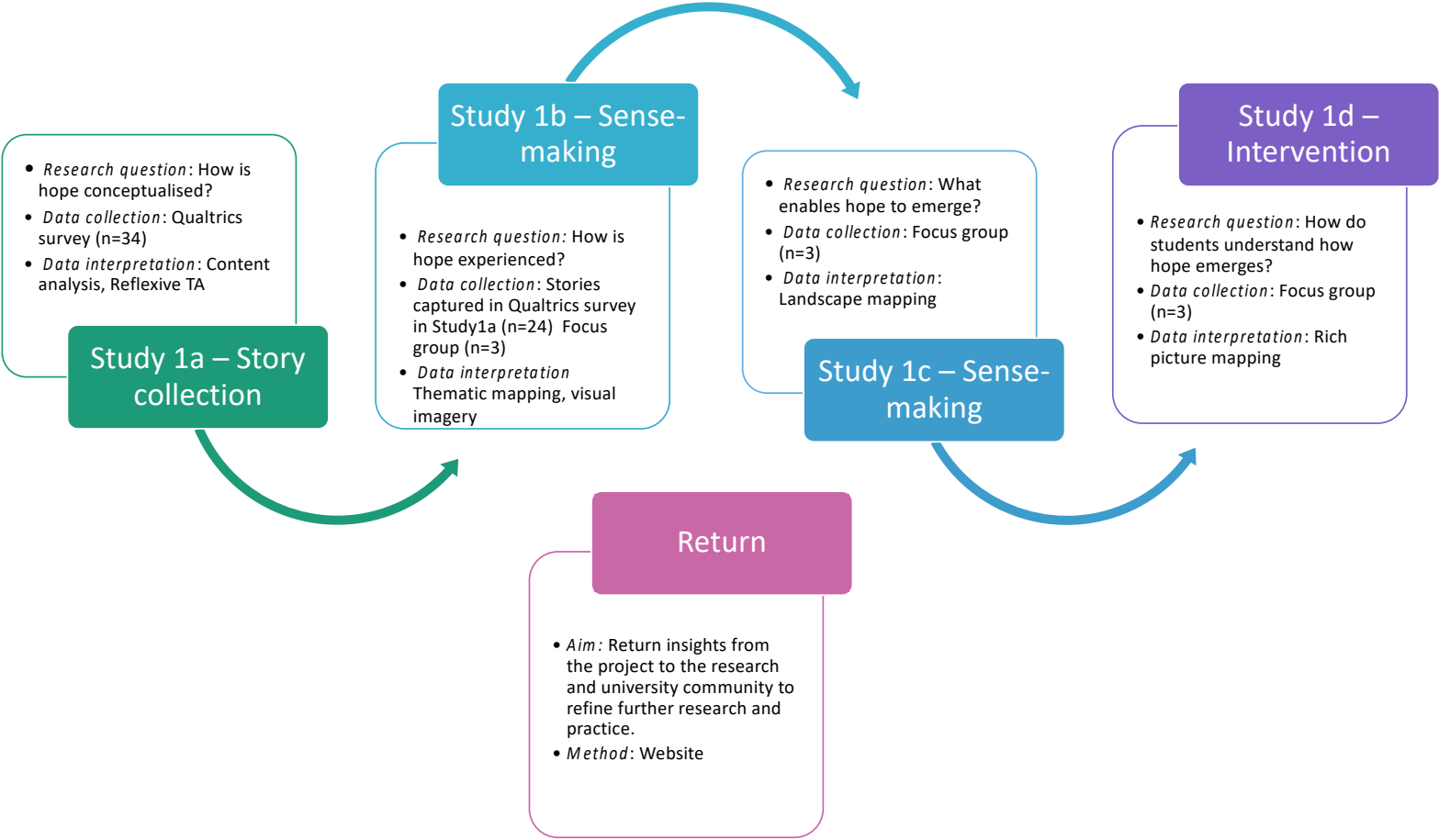
This study was designed within the Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) methodology (Kurtz, 2014) to enable the co-creation of knowledge with participants, deepening our understanding of the experience of hope from their perspective. The PNI methodology draws on stories of lived experience as the primary data source, with

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a strong participatory emphasis that prioritises the participants' perspectives in the interpretive process. Situated within a social constructionist and transformative epistemology, the methodology combines the real-world experience of participants with the researchers' expertise in facilitating interpretive methods to generate new knowledge that can help refine theory and practice (Colla & Kurtz, nd). This study was designed within the three essential phases of PNI: 1) story collection, 2) sense-making, and 3) interventions to return insights to the broader community (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

PNI Phased Study Design with Research Questions and Methods



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Study 1a was designed to support the story collection phase, capturing data on participants' conceptualisations and stories of hope, including a range of interpretive questions about these stories. This design enabled the inclusion of every participant's perspective in the subsequent sense-making phases conducted in Study 1b to 1d.

Study 1a used an anonymous online survey to capture data, which was analysed to determine how students conceptualise the abstract concept of hope. Study 1b was designed to address the sense-making phase of PNI, inquiring into how students narrate their experience of hope. Data was collected and interpreted in a collaborative focus group with a subset of participants from Study 1a. Study 1c continued the sense-making phase, inquiring into the factors that enabled hope to emerge in the stories in Study 1a. This study phase was also conducted in a collaborative focus group with the same subset of participants in Study 1b.

Finally, Study 1d was designed to address an inquiry into the interplay between factors identified in Study 1c in the emergence of hope, identifying students' lay theories of how hope emerges. This phase of the study also aimed to co-design how insights from the research would be returned to the community. The same subset of participants participated in a collaborative focus group, incorporating a series of sense-making activities that formed an intervention to support the return phase of PNI. We drew on the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) to guide both the research design and preparation of this paper (O'Brien et al., 2014). All procedures were approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics ID: 20781).

6.2.2. *Participants*

We used a purposeful sampling of 34 university students at a large Australian university with a cross-cultural population. In participatory research, it is essential to consider participants' willingness and availability to contribute, as well as their capacity to communicate and reflect on their experiential knowledge (Bernard, 2002). Given the theoretical nature of this inquiry, the strategy was also to strive for maximal variation sampling to gain a diversity of perspectives within the bounds of the resources available (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Therefore, participants were recruited from a large research-intensive university with a competitive academic entrance requirement. Drawing from this population ensured that it could reasonably be expected that participants may be interested in pursuing research activities and possess the linguistic and reflective capabilities to engage in the sense-making process as co-researchers.

Participants were recruited from two undergraduate elective subjects, selected for their breadth of representation across a broad range of study disciplines. The majority of participants were studying either arts (38%) or science (26%), with representations from biomedicine (15%), commerce (12%), and design (6%) (3% of students declined to identify their course). Students varied in their years at university, with the majority being first-year students (53%). Fifteen percent of students were in their second year of study, 26% in third-year, and 6% in fourth-year. Students ranged in age from 17 to 29, with a mean age of 19.59. Most participants identified as female (75.53%), with 26.47% identifying as male. The sample also represented a diversity of ethnic identities, including Caucasian (23%), Chinese (20%), Asian/Malaysian Chinese

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(18%), South-East Asian (15%), Arab (6%), Indian (3%), Nepalese (3%), Bangladeshi (3%), Latin American (3%), Korean (3%), and unknown (3%).

Of this broader sample, three students participated in the focus groups for Study 1b to 1d. These students represented commerce, arts, and biomedicine disciplines. They ranged in age from 20 to 27 (mean age 23), with two identifying as female and one as male. One student was in their second year of study, while the other two were in their fourth year. The students identified as Australian, Asian, and Malaysian Chinese.

6.2.3. Data Collection

Students were invited to participate in the research through an announcement on their subject learning management system. This notification included a link to an online plain language statement (PLS) and consent form, enabling students to make an informed decision to participate in the first study phase, with the option to indicate their interest in participation in subsequent phases. An anonymous online survey was designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative questions that explored students' conceptualisations and experiences of hope, as well as a range of demographic details (see Supplementary Information: doi:10.17605/OSF.IO/8HVTQ). Thirty-four students completed demographic details and responded to the qualitative question regarding their conceptualisation of hope (used in Study 1a). Only 24 students completed the entire survey, including questions regarding their experience of hope used for analysis in Study 1b to 1d. Data was collected between August 2021 and March 2023.

A series of three semi-structured focus groups were conducted between April and June 2023. Students who indicated their interest in participation were extended

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an email invitation to participate, including a link to the PLS and consent forms. These workshops were structured to follow the protocols of PNI sense-making using the data from the 24 stories collected in the online survey (see Supplementary Information: (see Supplementary Information: doi:10.17605/OSF.IO/8HVTQ) for full protocols of the 3 workshops). The first focus group began with an overview of the PLS, including the limits of confidentiality and anonymity. Group discussion ensued to co-create rules of engagement prior to agreeing to participate, ensuring that all students were comfortable to provide informed consent.

Story cards were prepared for each story, transcribing the details from the Qualtrix survey, including the storyteller's interpretations of their experience. These were grouped into packs of eight for each co-researcher to work with on a Miro digital canvas during the workshops. Sessions ran from 90 to 120 minutes and were offered in hybrid mode using the Zoom videoconferencing platform to give students a choice for attending in the modality that best suited them. In session one, two students participated online with a research assistant, and one participated on campus with the researcher. For sessions two and three, all students chose to attend in person. Sense-making activities involved the use of a Miro digital canvas to ensure that participants could access in either modality. For the final session, participants were given the choice of digital or paper versions and all three chose to use paper materials. The sessions were recorded using an enterprise version of the Zoom videoconference platform to enable the generation of a transcript to support the analyses.

6.2.4. Data analysis

6.2.4.1 Study 1a. Survey data was collated using Qualtrix survey software and then exported to nVivo software for analysis of Study 1a. Qualitative content analysis

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was used to analyse the language students used in response to the question: “*How would you describe hope? Imagine that you are explaining this term to someone who has no experience of hope and answer the following question: What, in your opinion, are the key components and indicators of hope?*” The question format was adapted from the protocols developed for prototype analysis concepts (Fehr & Russell, 1984; Hone et al., 2015). We followed the inductive approach to content analysis outlined by Elo and Kyngas (2008). This included 1) data preparation: identifying the unit of analysis as predominantly single words, with three two-word conjunctions to ensure semantic meaning was maintained; 2) organisation: definitions were coded in nVivo and then exported to Excel to count frequencies; and 3) reporting: coded data was entered into word cloud generator to create a data visualisation.

The same data was then analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021). This method was chosen for its theoretical flexibility, enabling an iterative approach that blended deductive interpretations based on existing theoretical frameworks of hope and related constructs, with inductive data-driven themes. We used Braun and Clarke’s (2012) six recursive phases of analysis that are summarised in Table 1. In addition to the reflexive processes outlined in this table, we also engaged a research assistant who was not as deeply immersed in the hope literature as the first author to separately code the dataset. This additional process allowed us to engage in generative dialogue to surface the assumptions that we each brought to our analysis of the identified themes. It also enabled us to co-construct shared meaning in the way the final themes were storied, including checking these with participants in Study 1d. This was an important consideration in ensuring epistemological integrity, given the underlying assumptions of the social

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constructionist approach of PNI. We acknowledge that our interpretation of this data cannot be separated from our own experience and meaning-making, therefore this was analysed as a separate study outside the PNI methodology.

Table 1

Analytical Processes Used for Each Phase of Reflexive Thematic Analysis

| Phase | Analytical processes |
|------------------------------|--|
| Familiarisation | Multiple reads of the dataset were conducted with annotations of potential candidate codes. These were predominantly deductively derived semantic codes based on Snyder et al.'s (1991) two-factor theory of hope, as well as Bernado (2010) and Colla et al.'s (2022) expansion of this theory. |
| Generation of initial codes | An initial set of codes (10) were developed in nVivo derived from the annotations in Phase 1. The dataset was systematically analysed, coding key features of how students conceptualised hope. When features did not fit into one of the deductively derived codes, a new coding category was created, creating inductive data-driven semantic codes. This resulted in an initial coding framework of 18 codes. A review of the excerpts in each code was then double-checked to ensure shared meaning across the code. This resulted in some excerpts being re-coded. For example, "Positive Feeling" was distinguished from "Motivational Energy" (such that Positive Feeling captured any positive emotions/feelings that were not described as motivational energy), or recoding excerpts that were not self-referential from the "WillPower" code to be more in alignment with Snyder's theory. |
| Searching for initial themes | The coded data was then reviewed within and across each code, identifying similarities and overlaps between data included in each code. Several codes were clustered to form a unified theme of shared meaning, eg. the codes "Aspirational", "Possibility", "Positive Expectancy" were collapsed into the theme "Aspirational possibilities". The mapping of these clusters of codes also enabled themes that distinguished features that may be similar but provide important nuance, eg. creating a separate theme for "Faith, belief, or trust in possibilities". A total of 12 initial themes were developed. |
| Reviewing potential themes | A recursive analysis of each theme was conducted to check for shared meaning of the excerpts included and within context of the broader dataset. This analysis identified further similarities between themes that did not meaningfully distinguish data in relation to the research question. For example, the excerpts coded in "Future-oriented" did not provide additional information above and beyond "Aspirational possibilities" therefore this was reclassified as a code within this theme. Some themes were clustered as sub-themes to maintain their nuance within the broader theme, while they were theoretically similar enough to be collapsed. For example, "Goal oriented" was included as a sub-theme within "Aspiration or expectancy of desired future" to highlight how prevalent specified goals were in students' conceptualisations given the centrality of this to Snyder's theory. This analysis resulted in a reduced set of 6 themes. |
| Defining and naming themes | A reflexive analysis of the extracts within these themes was conducted to move beyond the semantic meaning to a deeper level of interpretive meaning used to define each theme. This reflection included consideration of how to best story students' core conceptualisations of hope, both linked to theory and identifying concepts not currently incorporated within hope theory. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Producing the analytic report | The first author's notes developed throughout the reflexive analytic processes were used to form the data analysis outlined in the results sections. |
|-------------------------------|--|

6.2.4.2 Studies 1b to 1d. The interpretive processes used in the sense-making phases of Study 1b to 1d engaged participants as co-researchers to inquire into each research question using the stories of hope data from Study 1a. These interpretive processes were facilitated by the researcher, following the sense-making processes in PNI. The sense-making process includes iterative foraging and sense-making loops, moving through contact with the story dataset, deconstruction of elements, foraging for evidence, contemplation of themes, and construction of artefacts to communicate insights (Kurtz, 2014). A variety of qualitative interpretative methods were used including, thematic mapping (Marx, 2022), visual image construction (Knowles & Cole, 2008), and rich picture mapping (Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022). How these methods were used within the sense-making processes of PNI is detailed in Table 2. It is relevant to note that students were not primed with any information about how hope has been conceptualised in the literature, rather the process was designed to allow their interpretations to emerge from the story data.

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Table 2

Methods Used for Each Part of the Sense-Making Processes across Studies 1b to 1d

| Study | Sense-making Processes | | | | |
|-------|--|--|---|--|---|
| | Contact | Deconstruction | Foraging | Contemplation | Construction |
| 1b | Student co-researchers (SCR) worked with one story pack, inquiring into the experience of hope. This included coding the stories using Shneiderman's (1996) method. Twice-told story method (Kurtz, 2014) was used to share key insights, ensuring some contact across the entire dataset. | SRCs deconstructed stories and responses to interpretive questions to identify themes of the experience of hope. Each SRC shared their themes, and group discussion enabled combining language for shared meaning, resulting in a final set of 10 themes. These are shown as Figure 4. | SRCs re-explored their story pack for evidence of these themes, mapping each theme back to the story data to ensure integrity in interpretations and frequency of representation across dataset. | SRCs contemplated the overall map of themes of the experience of hope to gain a broader picture across the full story dataset. | SRCs each constructed a visual image to represent the collective experience of hope. These are shown as Figure 5. |
| 1c | SRCs worked with a new pack of stories inquiring into the factors that enable hope to emerge, broadening their contact across the dataset. Themes were shared across the group to create some contact across the entire dataset. | SRCs deconstructed the stories and responses to interpretive questions to identify enablers of hope. The researcher collated the frequency of these enablers with SRCs, including testing for shared understanding and differences between similar enablers. This resulted in a final set of 10 themes. These are shown as Figure 6. | SRCs re-explored their story pack for context around these enablers and mapped these onto a simplified version of Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model. This included representing enablers across the self as a system (thinking, feeling, doing), as well as within systems. | SRCs were invited to contemplate the relationship between these enablers and create links to show any interconnected enablers. | The socio-ecological model was a visual artefact that represented the sense-making process, shown as Figure 7. |

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| Study | Sense-making Processes | | | | |
|-------|--|---|---|--|--|
| | Contact | Deconstruction | Foraging | Contemplation | Construction |
| 1d | SRCs worked with a new pack of stories to inquire into lay theories of how hope emerges, ensuring they had contact with the entire dataset across the 3 studies. | Researcher shared data visualisations to reorient SRCs to themes across Study 1a to 1c. SRCs reviewed their story pack to deconstruct these themes in the story data. SRCs shared an example with the broader group to create some contact across the full story dataset. | SRCs were invited to construct a rich picture map (RPM) to represent their theory of how hope emerges. They foraged in their story pack to provide examples or inspire images that ground the RPM in the dataset. | Each SRC shared their RPM including their interpretation with the group. Open dialogue was used to contemplate the similarities and differences. | The SRC rich picture maps were used as artefacts to communicate key insights on a website that will be used to facilitate further research and practice. These are shown as Figure 8 |

6.3. Results

Results for each phase of the study are outlined in the sections below, linking the analysis to each of the specified research questions.

6.3.1. Study 1a: How do students conceptualise hope?

The first research question explored how students conceptualise hope. Data were first analysed to identify the language students used in defining the key indicators of hope. A total of 48 key words were identified, and the frequency of the words (min=1, max=11) are visualised in a word cloud in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Language Used to Describe Hope and its Indicators



Students described hope as a positive feeling that was future-oriented, looking forward to desired possibilities or goals being realised. They articulated that hope was something that gave meaning to one's life and created motivation and belief in their abilities. Several students described this as a sense of light or energy that was life-sustaining. They also identified that hope enabled them to overcome, conquer or

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persevere through difficulties. Some students described hope as a positive emotion, others as thought or belief, and some described it as a sense of faith or trust. They described key indicators of hope as a sense of motivation, goal-oriented thinking, an optimistic belief or aspirational expectations, the strength to overcome difficulties, being open to opportunities, and chasing their goals.

Students' definitions of hope were also thematically analysed to enable a comparison of their conceptualisations to academic models. As previously described, the analysis process to derive these themes began with a deductive analysis that compared students' conceptualisations of hope to elements of existing theories of hope. Inductive analysis was used to derive themes for the data that did not fit within these models. Six overarching themes were derived, including several sub-themes that illustrated relevant nuance related to existing theoretical models. The labels for these themes are data-driven, reflecting the inductive and deductive processes. An overview of each theme, including sample quotes that reflect the essence of the theme and the frequency of excerpts coded to that theme, is outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Themes and Sub-Themes Derived Through RTA, Including Frequencies, and Illustrative Quotes

| Theme | Sample Quotes | n | % |
|--|--|----|------|
| Aspiration or expectancy of desired future | "A sense of optimism regarding things that will happen in the future." | 29 | 34.9 |
| (sub-theme: goal orientated 4.8%) | "A desire or longing for something positive to happen." | | |
| | "Hope is the feeling that there is light at the end of a tunnel meaning that there is something positive coming soon or that it is possible for something positive to happen." | | |
| | "...having a goal that is driven by internal needs and chasing that goal." | | |

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| Theme | Sample Quotes | n | % |
|---|---|----|------|
| Faith, belief, or trust in possibilities <i>(sub-theme: external locus of hope 1.2%)</i> | <p>"Having hope is to have faith that something is possible."</p> <p>"A thought or a belief that brings me positivity."</p> <p>"Hope to me means your trust towards a goal you want to achieve in the future."</p> <p>"Hope is an external factor that correlates with internal motivation."</p> | 8 | 9.6 |
| Waypower, reflecting action orientation to move towards aspired future | <p>"It involves staying positive and optimistic within the consciousness of whatever you would like to happen, will happen if you are also putting in some effort."</p> <p>"Able to pursue, discover and live your truth. Hope is the feeling of just being able."</p> <p>"Having hope is to say that the person develops an awareness that certain chances or achievable actions may allow one to change one's status quo."</p> | 3 | 3.6 |
| Willpower, including agency thinking <i>(sub-theme: perseverance in the face of challenge 10.8%)</i> | <p>"The key components of hope are the existence of desire and the willpower to live to chase the desire. Indicators of hope might be having the strength to withstand and overcome difficulties."</p> <p>"Hope, in my opinion, is something positive that elicits an ambition or an aspiration in you."</p> <p>"Having hope means that you persevere through a situation waiting for the good outcome to eventually arrive."</p> <p>"Hope is when you rise from the pain, turmoil and despair of your current and past situations, and look forward to a brighter and shiny future."</p> | 16 | 19.3 |
| Positive feeling | <p>"Hope almost feels like bravery coursing through your veins with every heartbeat. However, it's not adrenaline-fueled or anxiety-provoking, instead, hope is gentle and serene, it makes you feel able."</p> <p>"Hope is a unique feeling one would feel when expecting certain events to have a very low chance of happening to happen. A positive emotion which is as precious as diamonds in time."</p> <p>"Hope is feeling like you can wake up and achieve happiness that day. It is positivity and a light, fluttery feeling in your chest like you are meant to exist."</p> | 12 | 14.5 |

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| Theme | Sample Quotes | n | % |
|--|--|----|------|
| | “Hope is when you have a feeling inside you that you know something will happen, or when you wish something to happen.” | | |
| Motivational energy (<i>sub-theme</i> : sense of purpose 7.2%) | <p>“A reason that keeps you motivated even in the hardest times.”</p> <p>“A mental belief that gives you energy to achieve what you desire. As long as you believe in it, you will have a small energy boost to keep you moving.”</p> <p>“Hope is like a beacon of light that keeps you going in life when you’re feeling down.”</p> <p>“Hope is something that gives you meaning and value in your life.”</p> | 15 | 18.1 |

While there was evidence of aspects that are aligned with Snyder’s theory of hope, namely self-referential thoughts about one’s capacity to move towards their goals and determination to persevere in the face of challenges (agency thinking), there was less evidence of pathways thinking as a core aspect of students’ definitions. There were also notable distinctions from Snyder’s model of hope. For example, there was substantial evidence of the prevalence of aspiration or expectations of a desired future, which is aligned with Hope Theory, but these were not always goal-oriented. In fact, only a small portion of excerpts (5%) specifically referenced goals. There was also evidence of several students viewing this through a lens of faith or belief in the future rather than as a self-directed perspective of their agency to realise that future. This is more in alignment with Bernardo’s (2010) internal-external locus of hope expansion to Snyder’s theory.

The naming of the theme that incorporates agency thinking was also deliberately broader to reflect that some students conceptualised willpower as general determination rather than self-referential thoughts about their abilities to initiate and sustain movement towards their goals. Further, there was evidence of a separate

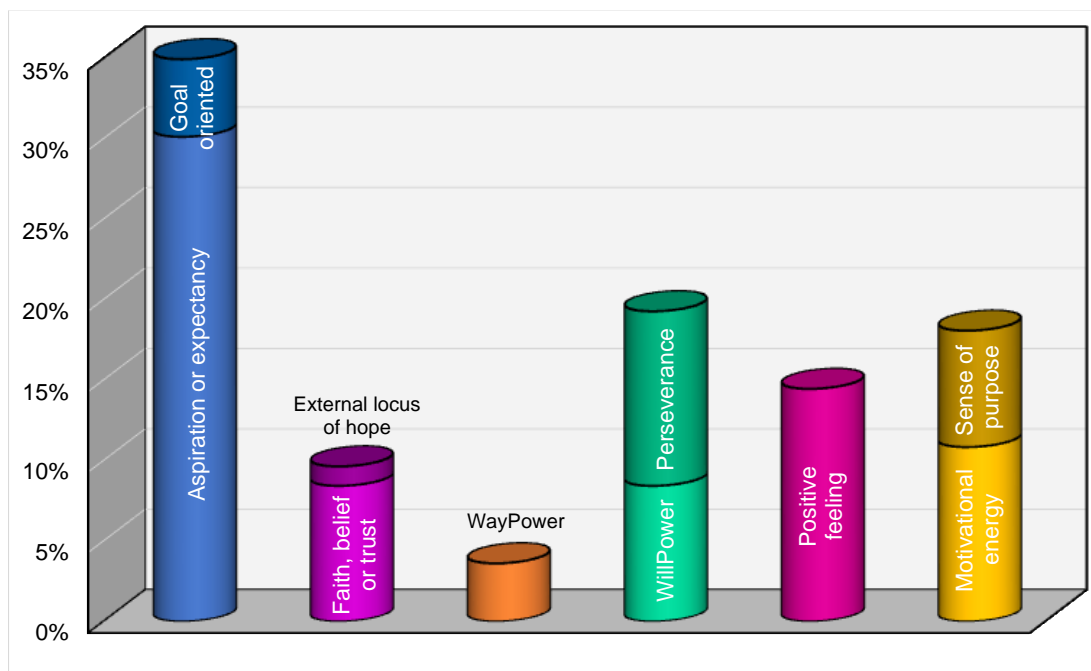
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theme that reflected students' perspectives that hope creates motivational energy through a belief in the possibilities of the future rather than as self-directed thoughts of their ability to move towards that future. This was often described as a sense of purpose that sustained their determination. While this is similar to Snyder's theory, it is more nuanced than a self-referential cognitive process. The prevalence of emotions being foregrounded in students' definitions of hope also differs from Snyder's theory that these are secondary components that are derived from cognitive processes.

It is relevant to note that these themes are not seen as mutually exclusive but rather one way to meaningfully distinguish the various components within students' definitions of hope. The prevalence of each theme and sub-theme in students' definitions of hope is depicted visually in Figure 3 below. This figure provides a graphical representation of the measure of alignment with components in the existing theoretical models, as well as inductive themes grounded in the data.

Figure 3

Proportion of Prevalence of Each Theme and Sub-Theme in Conceptualisations of Hope



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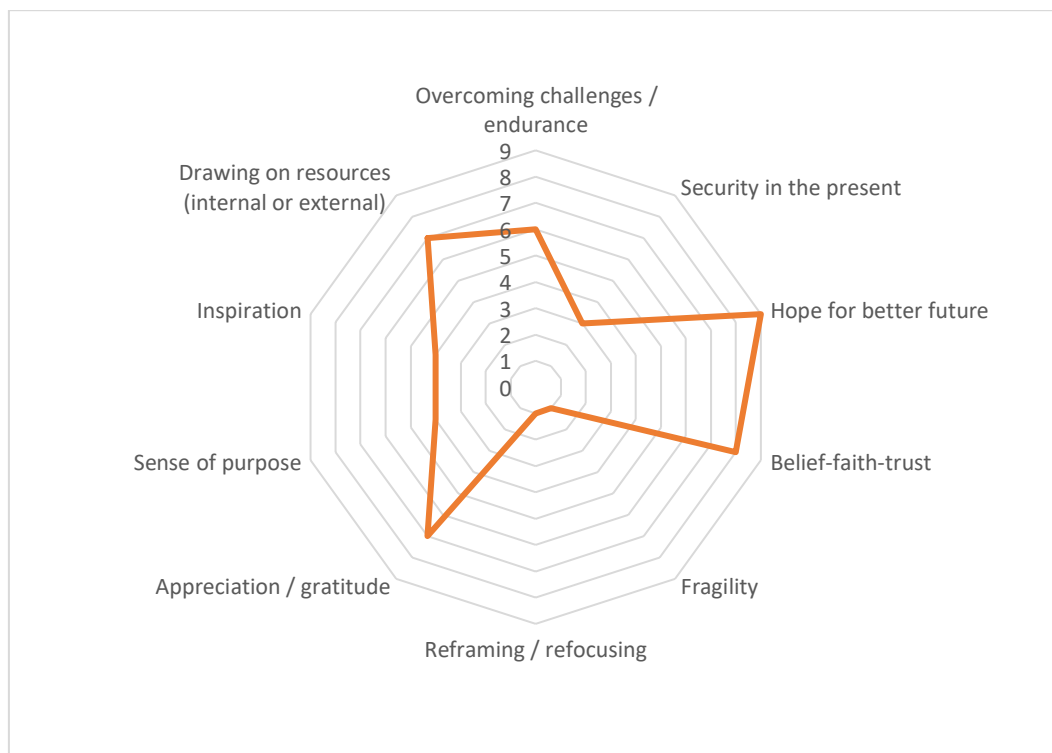
This figure highlights the prevalence of future-focused aspiration (34.9%) in students' conceptualisations of hope, with only 5% of excerpts reflecting a specific goal orientation. Willpower (19.3%) and motivational energy (18.1%) also featured strongly in students' definitions. This was followed closely by definitions of hope as a positive feeling (14.5%) or a sense of faith or belief (9.6%). There was little evidence of the prevalence of pathways thinking (3.6%) in the ways students defined hope.

6.3.2. Study 1b: How do students narrate their experience of hope?

The second research question explored the themes that emerged in students' stories of the lived experience of hope. Student co-researchers (SCR) identified ten themes across the story dataset that described how hope was experienced by students. They then mapped these themes back to each story to determine the frequency of the themes across the dataset. These are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Frequency of Themes Identified in Stories that Represent the Experience of Hope

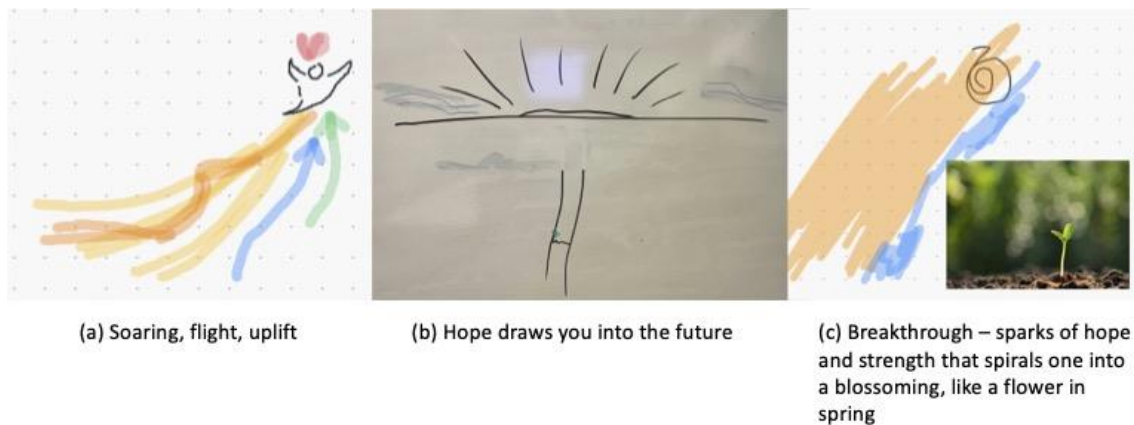


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The strongest themes in the SRC's interpretations identified the experience of hope as a positive expectancy or aspiration for a better future (described as hope for the future), a sense of belief, faith or trust, drawing on resources (internal or external), a sense of appreciation/gratitude, and overcoming challenges/endurance. SRCs also created visual images with titles to depict the experience of hope based on the story dataset (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Visual Images Created by Students to Depict the Experience of Hope



When students narrated their images describing the experience of hope, they included the prospective nature of positive expectancies creating a motivational energy or upward spiral. This is illustrated in the quotes below,

“So I guess I'd feel a lot of force lifting, well, a person up. So for me, hope is something like that. It's from multiple forces affecting that person. Well, it's not always pushing in the same direction, but in general when combined together, it really kind of like lifts someone up.” Student (a)

“...a path because hope is something you're moving towards, something that you're hopeful for. It is not, you're not hopeful for the present, but

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you're hopeful for something that you're on a journey towards. And then the other image was that of a sunrise. I think there's a lot of symbolism around the sun. And here I was sort of imagining the sun as something that is in the distance and on the horizon but something that brings light and positivity. And maybe you can only see a fraction of it. But as it approaches, like things really change." Student (b)

"I also drew a spiral. But then within the spiral, it comes out, which means that the person comes out of this spiral of perhaps negativity of hope or hopelessness. So this is what I hope brings to a person". Student (c)

They also incorporated aspects of how hope can enable perseverance in the face of challenge. For example:

"For me there were two images that really came to mind. One, was the life changes of a flower breaking through soil or pavement. And I suppose the symbolism behind that is like new growth and change breaks through perhaps..... and then I was trying to think, how is it that breezes are drawn in cartoons... (Researcher: So what would the breezes have represented for you?). I suppose the flow of change, the impermanence of how everything is right now, like maybe you're in a situation that is feeling quite hot and humid and it's like uncomfortable. But a breeze comes through ... or hope, and makes that a little bit lighter, a bit more bearable." Student (b)

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“So I included the picture of a sprout coming up from, coming up from a dark fertile soil because I remember in one of (Student 1's) stories; it was the one where the person was in a really dark space, and it's when they had to keep pushing and believing in themselves, and eventually when they saw results, I think they just grew a lot more confident and that's when hope flourished.” Student (c)

Finally, there was evidence of hope being experienced more as a feeling than a suite of thinking processes, as illustrated in the following quote:

“And it's something that a person feels kind of like a bit intuitively. So I drew a heart there. Just to symbolise the kind of, perceiving it intuitively instead of like using a lot of reasoning there. That's my interpretation.”

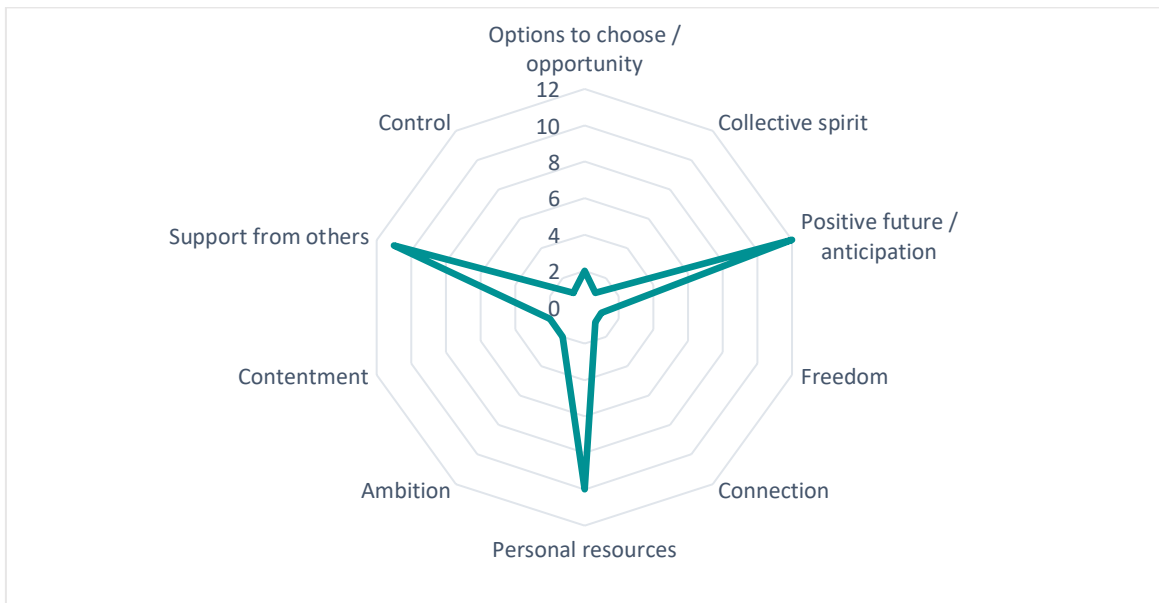
Student (a)

6.3.3. Study 1c: What factors do students identify as enablers of hope in their stories?

The third research question explored the factors students identified as enablers of hope in their stories. SRCs identified 10 enablers of hope across the story dataset, using the storyteller's identified enablers or their own interpretation if this data was missing or unclear. The frequency of these enablers across the dataset is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Frequency of Enablers of Hope Identified by Students in Stories



As can be seen from Figure 6, there were three enablers that were more strongly represented in the stories. These included positive anticipation of the future, personal resources, and support from others. These enablers were then mapped by SRCs in a socio-spatial format (see Figure 7). This process included exploring contextual details from the stories to provide a more nuanced examination of the enablers of hope across the self as a system (thinking, feeling, doing), and the self within systems, using a simplified version of Bronfenbrenner's (1978) socio-ecological model (direct relationships, indirect relationships or settings, macro-system factors). SRCs also connected elements that enabled hope to emerge where this was obvious in the stories.

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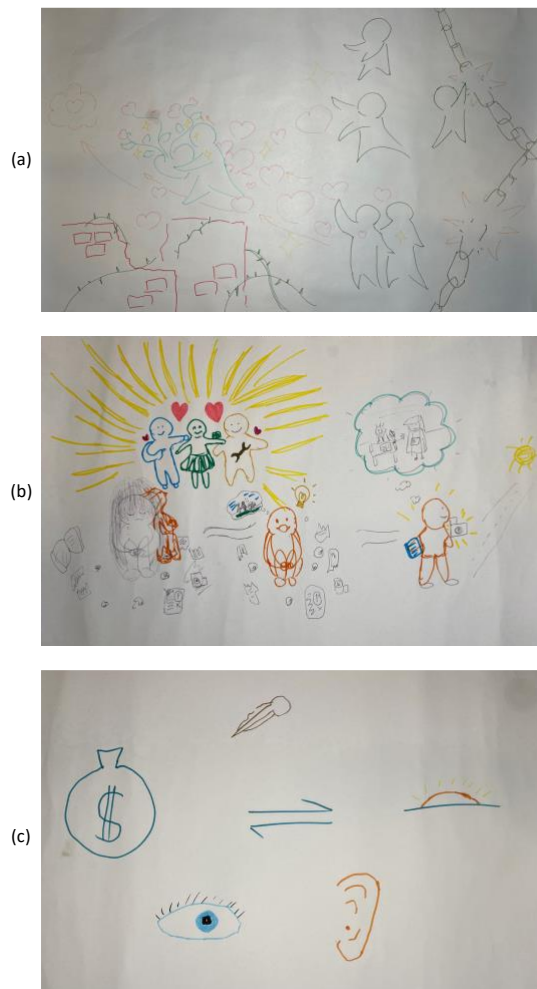
government regulations around mental health care plans and post-covid border openings.

6.3.4. Study 1d: How do students understand how hope emerges?

Study 1d commenced with a review of all the data from the previous phases of the study before SRCs created a rich picture map to represent their theory of how hope emerges. These depicted elements important in the emergence of hope, including how these may interact to create the experience of hope. These maps are shown as Figure 8.

Figure 8

Rich Picture Maps Depicting Student Co-Researcher's Lay Theories of How Hope Emerges



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Students' lay theories highlighted the interactions of the dynamic system that enabled hope to emerge. For example, Student (a) included the interrelationship between relational aspects that enabled hope, noting that others both inspired hope in the individual as well as provided resources to support hope to grow. They also noted how macro-system factors can break down barriers that enable the individual to move forward. This is illustrated in their narration below:

"So I guess I start with the person having hope. So a sense of something. It's quite alive and can grow. So, I express this as something like a plant growing from something, a heart. So that support from other people which I represent as hearts like pushing. And there's also a story that mentioned like seeing the hope of other people. So I also put that kind of heart representation into the people. And it's also like having the restriction being removed so that person can move forward and overcome the difficulties and so there were the walls I guess that were breaking down with ivy that keeps growing."

There was also evidence of the interactions between these external factors and how they elicited internal factors that supported hope to emerge. For example, Student (b) described how the support of others highlighted existing internal resources, which then lead to a willingness to explore, further fuelling their sense of belief in their own capacities. This is illustrated in the following excerpt.

"So, first I drew a person who is hopeless because of failed grades. There's no interest in hobbies, like not doing well at studies. But then, when the support of other people came in, tutors and friends and family and gets

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love and support from them, he starts to turn around and look towards them. And then that reminds them of the things that they did well in previously. So as a kid, maybe they did really well at things. And then that gives them the hope to recapture that joy again. So what they did was, they remember all of these that they could do, and they had done well in the past. This is their family and friends. And then they move on to picking up that camera again, just like filming Youtube videos, being motivated to study again and then thinking about the future: the career they want, them graduating. And then moving towards the positive future.... And then the people can also provide tools for them to use."

Students described how a vision of a positive future created a motivational pull but also that the movement towards that future created a sense of transformation both of self and of circumstances, as can be seen in Student (b)'s narration above, as well as Student (c)'s excerpt below:

"So there were six things that came to mind. I haven't really done a map or connected them in any way. There is reward (represented by) money, connection, change, having a vision, being empathised with – understood and heard, I suppose acceptance and then transformation – which may be the same as change. The change would be circumstantial, whereas the transformation is of self."

6.4. Discussion

This study aimed to address three objectives to deepen our understanding of how well folk theories of hope align with the existing scientific theories, specifically in

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young adults in a university context. Firstly, we sought to build upon existing literature assessing how students define the abstract concept of hope. The findings demonstrated alignment between students' definitions and some of the central tenets of Snyder's theory, such as the future-oriented nature of hope, looking forward to desired possibilities that created motivation and belief in their abilities. However, this was not always goal-oriented, as Snyder positions the focus of hope. There was also supporting evidence for the ability to persevere in the face of challenge but there was little evidence of students' referencing pathways thinking in the way that Snyder defined it. This is aligned with previous studies finding a lack of support for pathways thinking (Feldman et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021; Tong et al., 2010).

There were also some notable distinctions in the way students defined hope, including a stronger prevalence of conceptualising it as an affective rather than cognitive experience. This is supportive of the findings in other student lay conceptualisations (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Li et al., 2021; Luo et al., 2022) and more indicative of the way Averill et al. (1990) and Scioli et al. (2011) theorised hope than Snyder's cognitive model. There was also evidence for the importance of faith or belief in students' definitions, an aspect not included in Snyder's theory but indicated in other studies with students (Li et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2021). This finding lends support to Bernardo (2010) expansion of hope theory to include an external-internal locus of hope.

Our second objective was to address the gap in the extant literature to explore student experiences of hope in context to deepen an understanding of their conceptualisations of hope and better ascertain their lay theories of how hope emerges. There were several themes across both the abstract definitions analysed by

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researchers, and the experiences of hope analysed by student co-researchers that provided a convergence of evidence for some central features in how students conceptualise hope. These included experiencing hope as a positive aspiration or expectation of a desired future, a sense of faith, belief, or trust, drawing on resources (internal or external), the ability to overcome obstacles, and an affective experience that creates motivational energy. These findings indicate substantial overlap with the dominant psychological theory of hope but point to the importance of broadening this model beyond the individual and its limits solely to cognitive processes.

The methods of data collection and interpretation in these phases of the study enabled a more nuanced picture of how students perceive these different components interacting to create the experience of hope. For example, they described how the prospective nature of positive expectancies created an upward spiral of motivational energy, or how support from others enabled them to identify internal resources that they had forgotten. When the enabling factors were mapped in a socio-spatial format, it became evident that students experience these elements interacting across the self as a system (cognitive, affective, and behavioural), as well as influences on the self from external systems.

These findings highlighted the dynamic nature of some of these enablers; for example, the energy created from considering a desired future motivated them to draw on resources, both intrapsychic but also intrapersonal, supporting their belief in their ability to move towards that future, which further fuelled a sense of hope. In addition to this, students identified the role that macro-level system factors can play in either empowering or impeding capabilities that enable hope to emerge. While many scientific theories may acknowledge such factors, they are typically considered *ceteris*

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paribus to help isolate the effect of other elements. From students' perspective, these macro-factors were relevant in their lay theories of hope as either enablers or barriers.

The final aim of this study was to introduce a new methodology in hope research, PNI, with a view to investigating its efficacy in qualitatively exploring some of the complex dynamics in students' experiences of hope. The methods included in PNI, such as using stories and arts-based methods, demonstrated their utility in highlighting some of the contextual mechanisms and interconnections between elements that enable hope to emerge from the students' perspectives, above and beyond what can be ascertained from questions about beliefs or definitions. Such multi-modalities allow access to more emotional and preverbal sensory knowledge less accessible through direct questions, which is important in embracing the complex messiness that is part of the human experience (Archibald & Gerber, 2018; Barbrook-Johnson & Penn, 2022; Knowles & Cole, 2008)

This methodology also specifically engaged participants in the interpretation of their experiences, adding new insights to the body of literature. While each participant was able to contribute to these insights in the story collection phase, the student co-researchers provided feedback on the generative benefits they experienced from their deeper participation. This included deepening their understanding and pathways to hope through their exploration of other student stories, including experiencing a sense of hope in the process. Wellbeing literacy, defined as “a capability to comprehend and compose wellbeing language, across contexts, with the intention of using such language to maintain or improve the wellbeing of oneself, others or the world” (Oades et al., 2021, p. 1), poses that if you have more words, you have more concepts to construct your experience. In essence, literacy builds agency, a core component of

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hope. This may help explain how the PNI approach can create this generative experience for the co-researchers.

This effect was also supported by the methods used; for example, rich picture mapping can surface deeply held views but when used to generate group reflection can lead to new insights for participants (Bell & Morse, 2013; Conte & Davidson, 2020). Drawing on systems thinking, PNI holds promise as an approach that can explore experiences in context, providing more nuance by integrating multiple perspectives in the interpretative process (Conte & Davidson, 2020). Such an integrative approach enables the function and structures of participants' lay theories to be explored and then compared to scientific theories, providing a reflexive process of continuous learning to refine theoretical development and communication (Conte & Davidson, 2020; Furnham, 1988).

6.4.1. Implications

In recent years, a range of studies have begun to create a groundswell towards reconceptualising aspects of Snyder's theory based on evidence from taking a more grounded approach to the study of hope in different contexts. For example, Bernardo and colleagues' work has demonstrated that in more collectivist cultures there is evidence of social construction in hope, represented as an internal and external locus of hope (Bernardo & Mendoza, 2021; Bernardo, 2010; Bernardo et al., 2016). This is also supported in an African context, additionally highlighting the importance of a sense of meaning in providing pathways to hope (Wilson et al., 2021). The findings of this study add to this conversation, providing further evidence of the need to broaden our current scientific theory. For example, these findings suggest that broadening the definition of willpower, beyond just self-referential thoughts to also include the roles

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of external agents or spirituality, may be more useful in aligning scientific theories to the language and ways students understand the experience of hope. Waypower may also be more reflective of an action orientation to draw on resources, both internal and external, as one moves towards an aspired future rather than conceiving of multiple cognitive pathways. These nuances of language are critical to designing interventions that align to the way hope is experienced by young people.

These findings also add to other grounded studies that suggest that for young adults, hope is not experienced solely as a suite of cognitive processes but rather that the positive emotions that are elicited from either imagining a desired future or seeing the impact of one's actions are a core component of their experience of hope. Of course, we know from related theories the role that positive emotions can play in broadening one's thought-action repertoire and building social resources to enable the experience of hope, demonstrating the dynamic interrelated system of the self as a system and within systems (Fredrickson, 2001). However, the significant body of literature around broaden and build theory was not in existence when hope theory was developed. It may be time to integrate some of these advancements into our understanding of how hope emerges. Hope may be best understood as a multi-faceted construct extending beyond the specificity of goal attainment to a broader sense of aspiration that ignites resource-building processes (Li et al., 2021; Scioli et al., 2011).

6.4.2. *Limitations and future directions*

While this series of studies adds to the growing body of literature that has taken a more grounded approach to understanding the experience of hope, the results should be interpreted considering the small sample. As a deep qualitative investigation, this has provided some rich insights that are relevant to this cohort, who

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are quite an ethnically diverse group of students at a top-tier university in Australia. Future research would benefit from evaluating both the commonalities across different samples, as well as some of the differences, to help build a more idiographic understanding of how hope emerges for different emerging adult populations. To this end, the SRCs have helped co-design how these results can be shared with the broader research and university community on a website. This website will also be used as a data collection portal to add to this dataset and facilitate future research. While the richness of insights that can be gained from qualitative methodologies warrant building a mosaic approach of multiple smaller studies to deepen this understanding, there is also growing evidence of the benefits of using natural language processing models to support scaling up qualitative methods (Abram et al., 2020; Kalvesmaki et al., 2022). Such approaches could add to the sense-making process while reducing the burden on participants.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study using PNI in the hope literature. This may well be due to the emerging popularity of both systems and co-production methods in psychology, and as such, Conte and Davidson (2020) note that “as a field, we are not yet matured in our language, methods and processes to effectively capture and document complexity in action.” (p. 2). This study is designed to help bridge this gap by reflecting on the integration of these methods in a specific topic of hope, but we acknowledge that this is an emerging approach in psychology, and as such, the efficacy of the methods used across different samples warrants further investigation. For example, investigating what systems methods within PNI are appropriate for different age groups.

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It should also be noted that these results come from a particular approach to qualitative research that has privileged participants as experts in the interpretation of their data. We argue this has offered unique insights but also caution that any comparisons to other studies should note this particular nuance and consider how this may impact the interpretations. It is also relevant to highlight the constraints of PNI in terms of its time-intensive nature, as well as the important ethical challenges that can be involved in sharing stories that, even though de-identified, may still raise the possibility of limiting anonymity. This was raised as part of the consent form, and only data that students were happy to share with others was included, but this is a particular limitation of participatory research.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated new insights that can be gained from drawing on methods that enable a more complex dynamic investigation into students' theories of how hope emerges. Our findings support a growing body of research that suggests opportunities to refine our existing scientific theories of hope. Integrating insights from lay and scientific theories provides promising future directions for our field in developing a more nuanced and contextually diverse theory of hope that can help guide effective practices to enable hope in young people.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TOWARDS A DYNAMIC SYSTEMS THEORY OF HOPE

This chapter integrates the findings from previous chapters to propose an initial theoretical model of systems conceptualisation of hope. Drawing on both the literature and empirical findings from this thesis, I argue for a new meta-theoretical perspective in how we theorise hope, namely a complex dynamic model that positions the self as a system and within systems. This chapter outlines the proposed architectural structure of this new theoretical model. It provides both empirical and theoretical arguments for the elements included and the proposed mechanisms through which hope emerges. I finish by discussing the limitations of our knowledge in this area to date and present recommendations for future research to refine this further.

7.1. Reimagining hope theory through a complex dynamic systems lens

Before unpacking this model, it is worth returning to the beginning of this thesis to differentiate the approach I have taken from the meta-theoretical paradigm in which Snyder's (1989) hope theory is situated. As I explored in Chapter 3, his model is grounded in a modernist paradigm that prioritised the basic unit of individual cognitive processes as the foundation of the theory. As a result, Snyder drew the boundary at the individual, arguing that any external influences on the development of self-theories, such as those that form agency and pathways thinking, are mediated by individual perception (Snyder et al., 1991). Postmodernism, however, offers an alternative worldview that is deeply relational, prioritising interconnected processes and context, as the self evolves dynamically in relation to the environment (Cox & Lyddon, 2007). Postmodern perspectives pose a more constructionist understanding of

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the self, and it is within this meta-theoretical paradigm I frame the theoretical model proposed here.

In this section, I first outline the architectural structure of the proposed model, beginning with the theoretical and empirical foundations that broaden beyond the individual cognitive processes of Snyder's model to include the dynamic interplay of cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements of the self as a system. Secondly, I outline the evidence for expanding the boundary beyond the individual to include the influences of the self within systems. This section argues for the crucial importance of social resources in the experience of hope, and evidence for the role the external environment plays in developing capabilities critical to the development of hope. Finally, I position hope as an emergent experience, outlining the proposed structure of the way these systems interact to create this experience.

7.1.1. *Self as a system*

Snyder's theory was developed in a specific socio-historical culture of cognitive psychology in the late 80s, as outlined in Chapter 3. As a result, his model foregrounded the importance of cognitive processes, with affective processes seen as a secondary response. And yet, at around the same time, in developmental psychology, Kegan (1982) argued that neither cognitive nor affective processes are primary to human development, but rather, the two are integrated in the experience of the self as a system. These debates reflect a Cartesian dualism that pulls apart aspects of the integrated developmental system (Overton, 2010). However, a growing body of evidence from various disciplines demonstrates the value of looking at the self as an integrated system rather than drawing artificial boundaries around cognitive processes. It is perhaps the advances in neuroscience that have really challenged the

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previously held beliefs of dualism between mind-body in favour of an integrated perspective of the human experience (Johnson, 2008).

We now have a deepened understanding of how different sub-systems are interconnected and organised as a coherent whole, which supports an integrated perspective of the self as a system (Mischel, 2004). For example, there is now substantial evidence of the central role structures like the vagus nerve play in facilitating the dynamic flow of energy and information between the cognitive, affective, and somatic experiences of the self (Mead et al., 2021). Moreover, Porges' (1995, 2001, 2009a) polyvagal theory has demonstrated the interconnected role of affective and social experiences on the development of the autonomic nervous system. This theory explains the complex interplay between the psychological and physiological regulation that influences our experiences (Porges, 2009b), providing further evidence of the importance of considering the interconnected self as a system but also expanding beyond the individual system to an understanding of the self within systems.

7.1.2. *Self within systems*

A constructionist worldview sees the social and environmental domain as a critical backdrop to the evolutionary development of self, including the capabilities relevant to the experience of hope (Guidano, 1995; McAdams, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1991). The centrality of this contextual perspective is eloquently captured by Cox and Lyddon (2007), who state: "One exists within a system, not despite it; therefore, one's identity cannot be defined outside of the larger context of one's social, political, economic, or physical environment" (p. 214). Community psychology and contextualist

behavioural science have long argued for the importance of understanding psychological phenomena within context (Hayes et al., 2012; Stevens et al., 2014).

Further, a growing body of evidence in the field of social genomics demonstrates the impact that social environments can have on gene expression, including not just objective measures, such as toxins in an environment, but just as importantly, our subjective perception of the social environment, e.g. feeling lonely (Slavich & Cole, 2013). This provides some support for Snyder's decision to draw the boundary at the level of perception, as evidence shows that the impact of the social environment is mediated by the central nervous system (Irwin & Cole, 2011; Slavich & Cole, 2013). However, the effect of social systems on the development of neural cognitive processes cannot be understated. For example, interpersonal neurobiology findings highlight how our brains are structured and restructured by the dynamic interplay between the self and our interactions with our social and physical environment (Cozolino, 2014). There is a flow of energy within and between individuals and their environment that shapes human development (Siegel, 2012, 2015). We are social beings and therefore cannot disentangle ourselves from the role that social systems play in developing the elements that facilitate hope. As such, the theoretical model proposed here intentionally considers the development of hope through the interconnected influence of the broader social systems on the individual.

7.1.3. Hope as an emergent experience

Relational development systems (RDS) is a meta-theory developed in response to the limitations of split theories, such as the mind-body or cognitive-affective dualism (Overton, 2015). The RDS framework identifies the multi-directional influences of the self developing in relation to others and contexts (Lerner & Schmid Callina,

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2013; Overton, 2015). Principles of this meta-theory have been used to guide the development of this theoretical model, including a focus on processes, relational analysis of the multi-directional influences on development, and the employment of ideas from multiple theories to help explain how hope emerges (Overton, 2015). The emphasis in RDS-based theories is on the relational multilevel interplay between the individual and their context (represented as individual↔context), and with others in their social system (represented as individual↔individual) (Bowers & Bowers, 2023; Lerner & Schmid Callina, 2014). It is suggested that these relationships regulate human development, with healthy development emerging from the complex, non-linear and multi-directional processes between the individual and their environment (Lerner et al., 2018).

To integrate these complex interactions in the reconceptualised model proposed here, hope is theorized as an 'emergent experience', a term used ubiquitously across disciplines as diverse as physics, economics, and ecology. However, de Haan (2006) outlines a useful framework that crosses these interdisciplinary boundaries to make sense of some important structures in an emergent experience. The framework identifies that emergence arises from the interactions between elements, creating an experience with different properties than those of the elements in isolation. A simple illustration of this principle is water, which has different properties from the two elements, hydrogen and oxygen, that interact together to enable water to emerge. The processes through which these different elements interact are the mechanisms that facilitate the emergent experience.

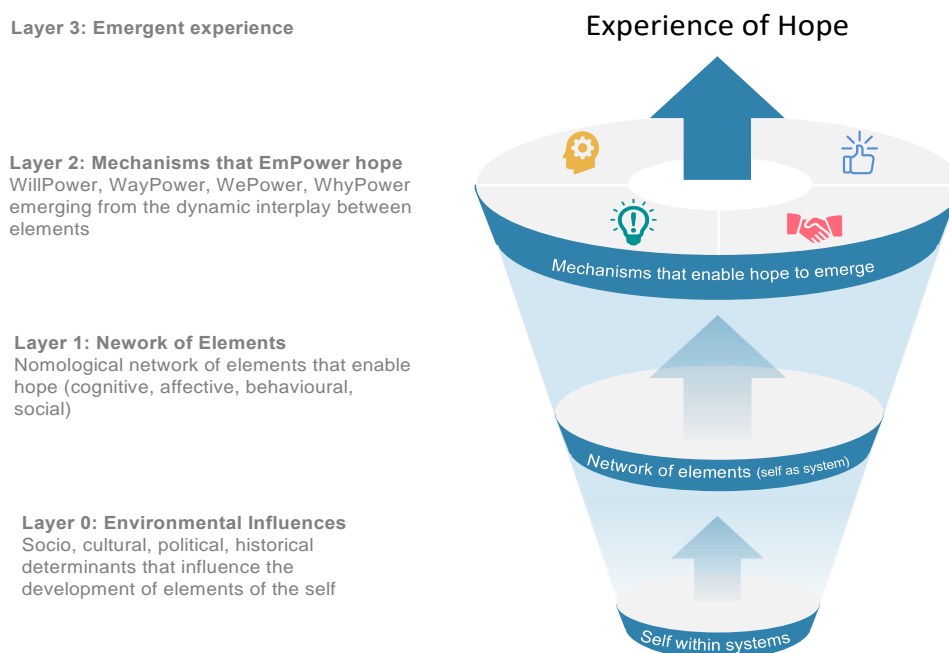
It can be useful to conceptualise these processes in layers, as this allows for a separation of the emergent experience (hope) and the elements that interact to

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produce it (de Haan, 2006). The underlying layer includes the elements (layer 1) that interact in a non-linear function to form the mechanisms (layer 2). These mechanisms empower the experience of hope (the emergent property – layer 3) that is distinct from the mechanisms and the foundational elements that work together to create this experience. In this model, I have also included a foundational layer that reflects the role the environment plays in the development of these elements (layer 0). This vertical layering is depicted as Figure 16. Some RDS scholars would conceptualise these processes as latent higher-order and lower-order variables (Lerner & Schmid Callina, 2014); however, I propose that the layering metaphor is a more useful heuristic to explain a complex dynamic system model of hope. In the following sections, I will unpack these layers, integrating theoretical and empirical evidence from this research program to support the reconceptualised model.

Figure 16

Vertical Layering of Emergent Model of Hope



**7.2. An integrative approach: The interconnected nomological network of hope
(Layer 1)**

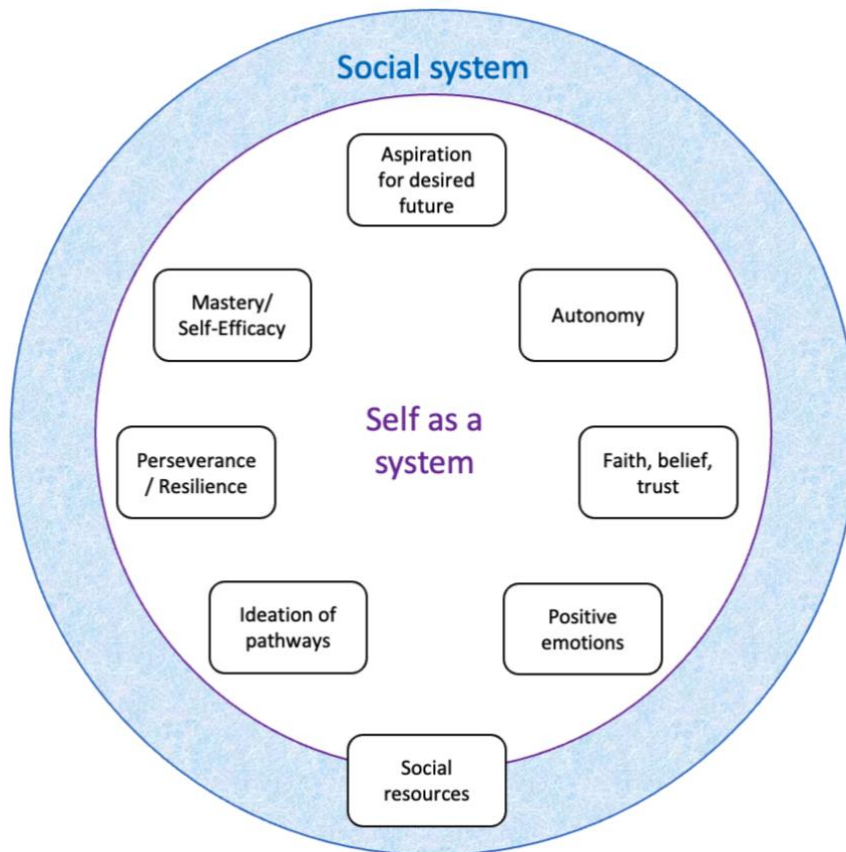
One of the RDS meta-theory principles is integrating multiple theories to explain the dynamic processes that lead to the emergent experience. This principle is instrumental in reconceptualising a theoretical model of hope, given the advances in psychology since the development of Snyder's Hope Theory. Moreover, this enables an integrative approach that interconnects related theoretical elements in a nomological network of hope, helping to explain the ways these elements interact in a synergistic suite of mechanisms to enable hope. This idea was first suggested by Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) in response to Snyder's (2002) seminal paper. This layer of my proposed model outlines the elements that form the active ingredients in the emergent experience of hope.

These elements are theorised in an interconnected and interdependent nomological network that draws on multiple theories to explain the interplay between them to enable the experience of hope. Notably, these elements can vary based on individual and contextual differences. Snyder (2002) himself conceptualised a nomological network of constructs that relate to hope, while I have brought these into a cohesive model that helps explain the theoretical propositions of dynamic feedback loops to create the experience of hope. This is not to suggest that these elements are synonymous with hope, falling trap to the jingle-jangle fallacy that is a common criticism in positive psychology (van Zyl & Rothmann, 2022). Instead, they contribute active ingredients in enabling hope to emerge, which is essential in considering how we facilitate hope in young adults (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). This underlying layer of interdependent elements is represented in Figure 17 as a top-down view of Layer 1

from our earlier vertical view (Figure 16). In the following sections, I outline the theoretical and empirical evidence for each component, highlighting the dynamic interplay between thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and social resources.

Figure 17

Nomological Network of Elements that Contribute to Hope in the Self as a System



7.2.1. *Aspiration for Desired Future*

One of the meta-theoretical assumptions of hope theory is that humans are intrinsically goal-driven, and thus goals are the starting point for the emergence of hope (Snyder, 2002). Snyder posed that goals should be of sufficient value to warrant the sustained attention that produces hope, but importantly, these could be approach or avoidant goals. However, the empirical evidence in this thesis suggests the specific goal-oriented focus of Snyder’s theory needs to be refined to a broader

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conceptualisation of the prospective importance of aspiring to or expecting a desired future. There was far less evidence of the specificity of framing this within a specific goal, particularly avoidant goals. While the aspiration of a desired future can broadly be considered a goal, it is crucial to consider the language used, as the specificity of goal orientation may be limiting in eliciting hope for some individuals. In both students' abstract conceptualisations and their stories of lived experience, they spoke of the motivational pull that was elicited by imagining a desired future; this is supported both by the extensive research base for optimism (Carver & Scheier, 2002; Carver et al., 2010) and aligns with recent advances in the science of prospection (Seligman et al., 2013).

Prospection seeks to understand the impact people's beliefs and simulations of the future have on their present (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007). For example, individuals' anticipation of their future, including imagining diverse pathways to move towards this, can guide cognitive and behavioural resources that impact their present experience (Baumeister et al., 2016; Suddendorf et al., 2018). Inherent in pragmatic prospection is a belief that the future is changeable and that we can bring this to reality (Baumeister et al., 2018), which is a key element in the experience of hope (Snyder, 2002). Indeed, Seligman (2018) named the neural circuitry thought to be responsible for this systemic behaviour as the hope circuit. Emerging research in the field of prospection indicates that this propensity for simulating the future is an innately human quality and draws in resources across the self as a system, such as cognitive and affective responses that have been shown to play a crucial role in the evaluation of divergent future pathways (Baumeister et al., 2016; Caruso et al., 2008)

7.2.2. *Autonomy*

There has been much debate in the literature about whether all goals are created equal when eliciting hope. However, substantial literature on self-determination theory (SDT) has demonstrated that the ‘why’ behind the goal matters (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Goals selected for autonomous reasons have functional and experiential consequences relevant to eliciting the experience of hope (Ryan et al., 1996). The cognitive evaluation theory (CET) component of SDT proposes that goals that are self-determined, i.e. they align with an individual’s values or are seen to be personally meaningful, will sustain or enhance high-quality autonomous motivation (Ryan et al., 2022). Indeed, the empirical findings of this thesis demonstrated that when students could engage in personally valued activities, this ignited their creativity and exploration of different pathways, fuelling a sense of hope.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that such autonomously motivated goals are associated with greater creativity (Liu et al., 2016), persistence (Howard et al., 2021), goal progress (Clegg et al., 2022), and positive affect including hope, enjoyment and pride (Paumier & Chanal, 2022). While most of these have been conducted in Western samples, these findings have also been shown in Eastern cultures. For example, across both Russian and American university students, goals that were self-concordant or chosen for autonomous reasons elicited a sense of optimism for the future (Sheldon et al., 2020). As demonstrated in the previous section, this positive expectancy of the future can garner relevant resources to create a hopeful experience.

7.2.3. *Faith, Belief, Trust*

The limitations of the Western neo-liberal culture in which hope theory was developed exposed several gaps, as outlined in Chapter Three, including the lack of

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representation of perspectives from more collectivist cultures where there may be conjoint models of agency. Markus and Kitayama (2003) note that a disjoint model of agency assumes that goals are defined independently of others and thus may obscure external agents' roles. They argue this is the dominant worldview of the culture in which hope theory was developed. Conjoint models of agency, by comparison, assume actions are motivated by or take into consideration the obligations of significant others, including supernatural/spiritual beings (Bernardo, 2010). SDT would consider this a more introjected or identified form of motivation (Ryan et al., 1996). In response to this limitation, Bernardo and colleagues (2010, 2014, 2015) have proposed an expansion of hope theory incorporating an internal-external locus-of-hope based on their studies in the global south. Their research suggest that goals, agency, and pathways thinking may be derived from social beliefs that emerge in the development of collectivist or individualist self-construals. For example, some consider a social belief in the instrumentality of fate or religiosity a relevant component of hope (Bernardo et al., 2016).

The results from the empirical work of this thesis also provide evidence for the inclusion of this element to enable a more idiographic and inclusive theory of hope. Students often described hope as a sense of faith or trust that things would work out, differing from the self-referential beliefs thought to elicit hope in Snyder's model. They also described the significant role of having a sense of faith in fuelling their motivation to act. I have termed this 'Faith, Trust, Belief' to be more representative of the inductive analysis from this program of research, as well as those in other grounded studies of hope, explored in Chapter Six (Li et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2021). This element also aligns with other theories of hope, such as Herth (1991), which includes

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an affiliative-contextual dimension that reflects an interconnectedness with self and others. This model was based loosely on the work of Dufault and Martocchio (1985), which considers spiritual, philosophical, sociological and psychological factors and reflects the central role of faith observed in nursing patients. Scioli et al. (2011) also included a spirituality component in their theory of hope, highlighting the role that valued attachments play as sources of hope.

7.2.4. Positive Emotions

While the cognitive revolution was a significant player in the development of Snyder's theory, it is also relevant to note that substantial advances in affective science have occurred since this time (Scioli, 2023). Such advances warrant the inclusion of positive emotions as an element in this reconceptualised theoretical model. Positive emotions can be defined as brief multi-system responses to the appraisals individuals make of their current circumstances (Fredrickson, 2013). Broaden and Build theory (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Fredrickson, 2005) provides valuable insights into the role these affective experiences play in eliciting hope. This theory, and the substantial empirical evidence that has supported the propositions, demonstrate that positive emotions facilitate a broadened thought-action repertoire to support the development of pathways planning and build both intrapsychic and interpersonal resources that can enable the experience of hope. For example, when people experience positive emotions, they show patterns of thought that are flexible and inclusive (Compton et al., 2004; Johnson et al., 2010), are more open to information (Estrada et al., 1997), and creative (Phillips et al., 2002).

They also broaden people's action urges, including increased openness to a wider array of behavioural options (Kahn & Isen, 1993), which is relevant to the action-

oriented nature of hope. Evidence also suggests that broadening and building of resources extends to the social realm, including predicting a breadth of social connectedness (Mauss et al., 2011; Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006) and leading to an expansion of participants' circle of trust (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). Snyder (2002) also acknowledged the reciprocal role that emotions play in shaping the thought processes of the individual but did not acknowledge the role these may play in building social resources, which is unsurprising given this substantial literature grew post the development of his theory.

The findings from this thesis demonstrated that the emotional component of hope was a significant defining feature in lay conceptualisations and theories of hope, both in the empirical findings and other lay studies analysed in Chapter Six. Indeed, as outlined in Chapter Two, the theoretical landscape of hope has long prioritised affective elements, such as Averill et al. (1990), Herth (1991), and Scioli et al. (2011) theoretical models. Research has also demonstrated that hope is among the top 10 positive emotions experienced most frequently (Fredrickson, 2013). Given the central and defining role emotions play in self-regulation necessary for the emergence of hope, this element warrants elevation beyond a secondary response (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002).

7.2.5. Social Resources

The neglect of the interpersonal aspects of hope in Snyder's theory is one of the most persistent criticisms of the model (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002; Bernardo, 2010; Colla et al., 2022). A sense of relatedness is a basic psychological need and one of the essential nutrients that contribute to motivation and wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, it is imperative that we consider the role of social resources as an element in this

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reconceptualised theory of hope. Wang et al. (2019) demonstrated that relatedness was the strongest predictor of autonomous motivation in students, leading to higher enjoyment and value in learning experiences, highlighting the multi-directional influence that this element plays. Even into adulthood, evidence suggests that we regulate our emotions in relationships with others (Chen & Liao, 2021). There has also been a growing body of empirical studies supporting a social basis for hope in settings such as mental health recovery groups for mental health (Rappaport, 2000; Torrissen & Stickley, 2018), community groups recovering from war-related trauma (Ankermann et al., 2005), and in mobilising community groups to action (Foster-Fishman et al., 2006).

Bernardo's expansion of hope theory to include an internal-external locus of hope goes some way towards acknowledging the vital role of external resources both in terms of the goals that are determined but also as a more conjoint model of agency and pathways planning. In Chapter Three, I argued for the inclusion of this intrapersonal element based on the substantial literature on the role of social resources in enabling hope, such as actively seeking support from others in pathways towards goals (Lee & Gallagher, 2018) or drawing on resources to support goal attainment (Hobfoll, 2002). Indeed, one of the most significant findings that emerged in the empirical work of this thesis was the role that social resources play in both being a source of hope and orienting the individual to their own internal resources.

7.2.6. Ideation of Pathways

This element is aligned with the pathways thinking component of Snyder's theory, which he defined as "a sense of being able to generate successful pathways related to goals." (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 570). However, I propose refining this definition based on evidence from the empirical findings of this thesis, as well as the literature reviewed in Chapter Six, which revealed that this definition is not particularly prevalent in lay beliefs/theories of hope. Instead, I propose that the ideation of potential pathways creates a sense of belief in our capacity to move towards our aspired future, which is more indicative than the assessment of these pathways being successful. Moreover, rather than focusing only on the individuals' internal paths towards their goals, this element incorporates social and/or spiritual resources that may be elicited in ideating different pathways.

This more nuanced definition draws on the science of prospection outlined in section 7.2.1, which evidences the impact mental simulations of pathways towards the future can play in garnering cognitive, affective and behavioural resources in the present. It also draws on the findings from Fredrickson's Broaden and Build theory outlined in section 7.2.4, demonstrating the role that positive emotions elicited from imagining an aspired future can play in broadening one's thought-action repertoire. This is particularly relevant in ideating pathways, as meta-analyses and a recent study have consistently demonstrated that participants experiencing positive affect generate significantly more creative ideas on divergent thinking tasks (Baas et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2022).

7.2.7. *Perseverance / Resilience*

Persevering in the face of challenges as one progresses towards one's goals was a feature of Snyder's hope theory, thought to emerge from the interaction between agency and pathways thinking. It has been represented here as an element in its own right, given the centrality of this feature in lay conceptualisations of hope outlined in Chapter Six, but also to acknowledge the significant role that coping skills play in facilitating an experience of hope. Aspinwall and Leaf (2002) argued that this was a considerable gap in Snyder's theoretical model, highlighting the substantial body of literature on related constructs that are relevant in supporting experiences of hope that have not been integrated into Hope Theory. The literature on coping skills and control beliefs that can sustain an individual's capacity to persevere or adapt to obstacles provides crucial insights into how to facilitate hopeful experiences (Dijkstra & Homan, 2016; Folkman, 1997; Folkman, 2010; Skinner, 1996; Skinner et al., 1988). Indeed, the literature reviewed in Chapter Three highlighted the significant positive association between coping skills, resilience, and hope in university students.

A sense of resilience or perseverance in the face of challenges was a fundamental feature in lay conceptualisations and theories of hope in both the empirical findings and literature review analysed in Chapter Six. Students noted the importance of being able to draw on social resources to help them overcome challenges, which aligns well with the resilience literature (Ang et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2013; Murray Nettles et al., 2000). Stevens et al. (2014) findings also demonstrated that access to contextual resources such as opportunities, choices, and support to overcome obstacles explained approximately 50% of an individual's self-report levels of hope. Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone's concept of active hope also aligns with

this element, influenced by their background in resilience, general systems theory and ecology (Macy & Johnston, 2022).

7.2.8. *Developing Mastery / Self-Efficacy*

The final element in this theoretical model reflects the developing sense of mastery or self-efficacy that facilitates the development of agency. Snyder differentiated hope from self-efficacy; indeed, research shows they are not redundant constructs (Feldman & Kubota, 2015; Magaletta & Oliver, 1999). His definition of agency thinking reflected an individual's self-referential thoughts about their capabilities to implement pathways towards goals, and he identified this as the motivational component of hope theory (Snyder, 2002). Snyder distinguished this from Bandura's (1977; 1982) self-efficacy theory, which focuses more on self-referential thoughts of whether one *can* perform the necessary actions to move towards goals rather than their thoughts of whether they *will* implement these actions. While this distinction is beneficial in differentiating between the two constructs, it is perhaps more relevant to consider the connections between them in facilitating hope (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). That is, environments that promote self-efficacy can be used as a developmental pathway to support agency thinking.

When we think about hope as a dynamic motivational system, we cannot help but draw on the importance of developing a sense of mastery or competence from SDT. This component is the third basic psychological need that facilitates high-quality motivation and growth, and reflects an individual's need to experience a developing sense of mastery in their environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These needs are satisfied through a complex interplay between the context and the individual, which then serves as an "energizer of behaviour" (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 101), demonstrating the

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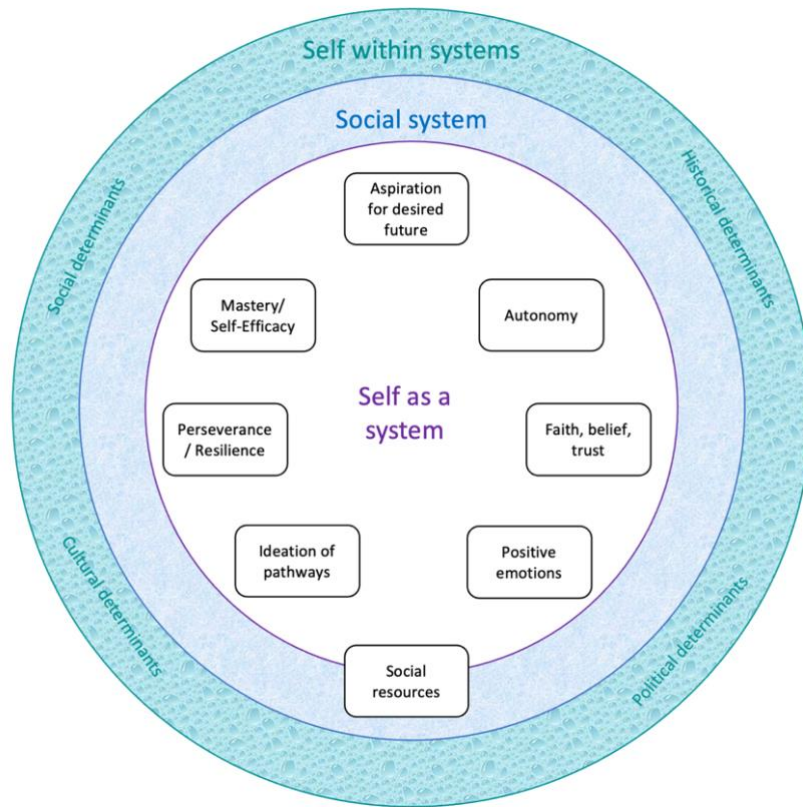
relevance of this psychological need to hope theory. Longitudinal studies support a reciprocal feedback loop between the satisfaction of competency needs and the experience of hope in young adults in the workplace (Wandeler, 2011). This was also reflected in the lay theories analysed in Chapter Six, where students assessed the importance of trying things out, gaining feedback, and feeling like they were making progress towards their aspired future, which facilitated a sense of hope. These results align with aspects of Snyder's agency thinking and provide further support for how this mechanism may develop. It is clear that these constructs work synergistically to enable the individual to respond to their environment as part of the system that facilitates hope (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2018).

7.3. The Importance of a Conducive Environment in the Development of These Elements (Layer 0)

The theoretical model I propose seeks to incorporate the fundamental role of external systems in enabling or impeding the development of such capabilities that facilitate hope. This foundational layer (Layer 0) is represented in Figure 18 as a top-down view of our earlier vertical model (Figure 16).

Figure 18

Enablers and Barriers to the Development of the Capabilities for the Self Within Systems



As I have argued earlier in this chapter, substantial evidence from multiple disciplines establishes the influence of the broader social systems on the individual’s development of the various elements included in the first layer of this model. It is insufficient to look only at the individual without examining the environment that can facilitate the development of these elements. Amartya Sen (1993), a Nobel prize-winning economist and philosopher, poses that individual agency or freedom is reflected through a person’s ability to develop capabilities facilitated by their own individual characteristics and affordances in the social environment. He outlines the importance of freedom *to* establish fundamental capabilities for wellbeing and freedom *from* conditions that impede the individual’s functioning (Sen, 1985).

Such a philosophy is aligned with other theoretical models of self-determination and health, including social determinants of health (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2006) and indigenous models of social and emotional wellbeing that articulate the impact of social, political, historical, and cultural determinants that influence self-determination (Gee et al., 2014). The significance of including this layer is also supported by the analysis of students' stories of the lived experience of hope in Chapter Six. Students noted the importance of macro-system factors as either enabling or creating barriers to developing capabilities relevant to hope. Stevens et al. (2014) also found empirical support for the importance of the context as an enabler of individual self-reported levels of hope, highlighting the provision of opportunities and choice and the barriers created by environmental obstacles. Their results showed that over 50% of the variance in hope levels was explained by contextual factors, emphasizing the importance of system-level factors in the emergence of hope.

7.4. Mechanisms that EmPower Hope to Emerge (Layer 2)

We now move up to the final layer of the model (Layer 2), where the various elements interact to form the mechanisms that enable the emergent experience of hope (Layer 3). Using a mechanistic typology of emergence enables us to reduce the complexity of the model to focus predominantly on the mechanisms created through the upward causality of the underlying elements (de Haan, 2006). In this model, I have included the original mechanisms proposed by Snyder: WillPower and WayPower but broadened the definition beyond self-referential thoughts. I suggest two additional mechanisms, WePower and WhyPower, reflecting missing intrapersonal and intrapersonal dynamics from the original theory. I have intentionally drawn on iterations of the word 'EmPower' to signify that individuals can tap into various

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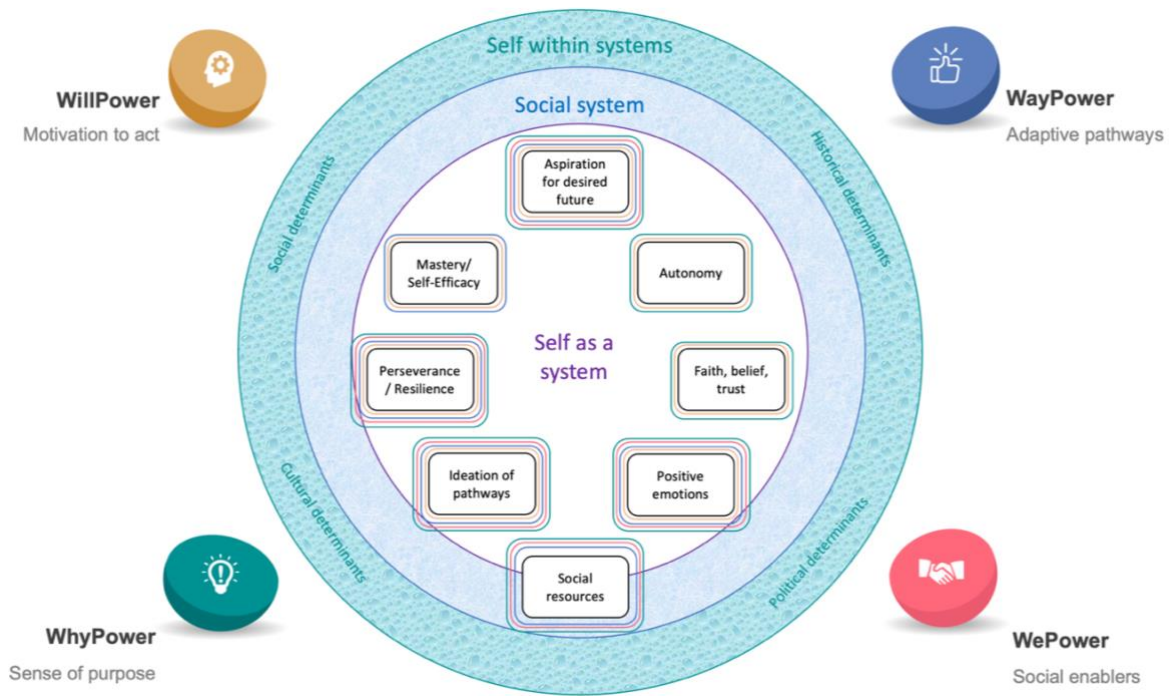
resources within their system that can empower them with goal-directed energy and pathways towards their desired aspirations.

The experience of hope emerges from the interactions between these mechanisms. That is, hope is more than the sum of the parts, differentiating the experience from the mechanisms that enable it, a departure from how Snyder conceptualised hope (Tong et al., 2010). By definition, an interaction requires a minimum of two mechanisms, but this may occur in varying degrees of complexity, incorporating up to four different mechanisms for an individual experience of hope. This structure is similar to the theoretical model of psychological capital (PsyCap), where PsyCap is considered a higher-order factor that emerges from the interactions between the four elements that comprise the model (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

I have proposed a set of elements that may cluster under each mechanism, recognising the idiographic nature of the individual experience. This is the difference between simply observing the mechanisms as factors that work together to create the experience of hope, allowing us to understand better how the system uses them to create change (de Haan, 2006). Identifying the clusters of underlying elements under the mechanisms provides nuance that can be used to inform contextualised or process-based interventions (Pawelski, 2020). In using such an approach, we do not lose the significant utility enabled by the elegant simplicity of Snyder's model. Instead, we provide more nuance around the organisation of mechanisms that facilitate the experience. The proposed clustering of the elements under each mechanism is depicted in Figure 19, again a top-down view of the layering from our vertical model (Figure 16).

Figure 19

Clustering of Elements Under Each Mechanism that EmPowers the Experience of Hope



7.4.1. WillPower

The definition of WillPower is broadened from Snyder’s concept of agency thinking to reflect the dynamic interplay between elements that create a motivational energy to act. This may be derived from the interactions between the positive emotions created by the vision of an aspired future that broadens an individual’s perspective of different pathways to move towards that future. Or it may be derived from the autonomous motivational pull that is created when contemplating purposeful goals that ignite the individual’s desire to build their sense of mastery towards such aspirations. There are numerous permeations between these elements that reflect both individual differences and responsiveness to context. What is crucial here is that these elements interact in ways that fuel the individual’s motivation to act, a key differentiator between the mechanisms of hope and more generalised positive

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expectancy constructs such as optimism and self-efficacy (Snyder, 2002). This conceptualisation also aligns with Macy and Johnston's (2022) active versus passive hope differentiation.

7.4.2. WayPower

I have also proposed broadening the definition of WayPower beyond the specificity of self-referential thoughts about the capacity to plan successful pathways towards one's goals. Instead, based on the arguments in this chapter, this mechanism reflects the individual's ability to discern adaptive paths towards their aspired future. The capacity for adaptability and perseverance surfaces through the dynamic interplay between cognitive, affective, behavioural, and social elements that can fuel the individual's determination to move towards their aspired future. For example, this may be elicited by an individual's willingness to ideate and explore different pathways that feed into a developing sense of self-efficacy. It also enables the individual to overcome obstacles, which may result from their internal resilience and ability to draw on social resources as needed. Alternatively, this may emerge from intrapsychic elements, such as a sense of faith that provides the individual with a feeling of comfort, enabling them to persist despite challenging situations. The broadening of this definition now encompasses a mechanism that can explain findings from populations facing severe hardship, such as terminal illnesses, yet still experiencing hope (Feldman et al., 2022).

While Snyder posed that the ability to persevere in the face of challenges resulted from the interaction between agency and pathways thinking, I argue that distinguishing features of each mechanism may provide greater utility in designing effective interventions to facilitate the emergence of hope. The clustering of the elements across both mechanisms supports such a design.

7.4.3. WePower

Building on the arguments outlined in Chapter Three and earlier in this chapter, I propose including an additional mechanism that reflects the interpersonal interplay between elements. This mechanism has been termed WePower, defined as the social enablers that facilitate the experience of hope. The addition of this mechanism creates a more inclusive model of hope, making this more applicable to developmental stages across the lifecycle where the necessity of social enablers of hope is crucial, as well as representative of more collectivist cultures. This mechanism encompasses Bernardo's (2010) expansion of hope theory and integrates findings from various grounded studies that highlight the importance of the interpersonal processes associated with hope (Isaacs & Savahl, 2014; Li et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2021). WePower moves beyond the inclusion of the social resources element at the underlying layer to reflect the dynamic feedback loops to other elements facilitated by social enablers. For example, the emotional support provided by connecting with significant others can foster a sense of agency and resilience, allowing the individual to tap into other resources within the system (Theron & Theron, 2013).

7.4.4. WhyPower

The final mechanism reflects the impact of a sense of purpose in eliciting the experience of hope. Purpose has been defined as an "enduring commitment to accomplish aims that are meaningful beyond the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self" (Bronk & Damon, 2022, p. 220; Damon, 2003). There is a substantial literature that connects purpose and hope, with these often being described as close cousins (Bronk et al., 2009; Bronk & Mitchell, 2021; Feldman et al., 2018; Feldman, 2013; Feldman & Snyder, 2005) and the inclusion of this mechanism integrates these

findings to facilitate the experience of hope. The empirical results from this thesis also provided evidence towards the bi-directional interactions between hope and purpose. It is relevant to note that this may be more or less important as a mechanism of hope, depending on the life stage and context of the individual. For example, for emerging adulthood, the population focus for this thesis, a sense of purpose in life is a key developmental task, while for younger age groups, this may be far less relevant (Bronk et al., 2009; Damon, 2003).

A sense of purpose can be elicited from the reciprocal interplay between goals aligned with one's values that fuel autonomous motivation, prompting the individual's willingness to invest valuable resources, such as energy or time (Bronk & Mitchell, 2021). Studies have shown that more personally meaningful aspirations enable more sustained motivation than less meaningful intentions (Ernst et al., 2018; Höchli et al., 2018). Additionally, the positive emotions elicited from imagining pathways towards a purposeful future can support the ability to overcome setbacks, seek social support, and ideate alternative routes, facilitating the experience of hope (Bronk et al., 2009; Bronk et al., 2018). Indeed, studies have shown that a sense of meaning or purpose mediates the relationship between hope and active coping (Jin et al., 2021).

7.5. Implications and Future Directions

The architecture and arguments presented throughout this chapter provide the first steps towards reconceptualising a theory of hope through a systems meta-theoretical framework. The model was derived from integrating empirical studies on the grounded experiences of hope and findings from a substantial body of interconnected theoretical literature to create a holistic theory. However, the structure and theoretical propositions of this model still require testing. For example,

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future research could ascertain the best fit for clustering the proposed elements within each of the mechanisms and provide further insights into how the mechanisms interact. This will allow a better understanding of the necessary and sufficient interactions required to elicit the experience of hope. Furthermore, there may be additional elements that are not represented in the current model that warrant inclusion.

One of the benefits of the integrated approach to developing this model is the utility it may provide in supporting the design of more nuanced and comprehensive interventions to elicit hope (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). This is particularly important given the limited evidence of the efficacy of hope interventions based on the current theoretical model of hope (Weis & Speridakos, 2011). Designing a model that identifies the active ingredients aligns with recent advances in intervention science that have called for a more process-based approach (Ciarrochi et al., 2021; Hayes & Hofmann, 2021; Hayes et al., 2020; Pawelski, 2020). As a result, practitioners can design more effective and individualised interventions that incorporate relevant biopsychosocial and spiritual mechanisms, which are likely to form a more effective mode of treatment (Giacomucci, 2021; Trickett, 2009). Importantly, the model also provides a framework that can inform how we design enabling environments for hope to emerge, allowing larger scale approaches beyond individual interventions. An example of how this can be applied in educational contexts is outlined in Colla and Mossman (2023) article on an integrated learning design approach.

It is hoped that by providing a layered theoretical structure we can energise the next wave of research to advance our understanding of hope, testing each of the theoretical propositions rather than jumping 'straight into the action' of testing its

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utility, as was argued in Chapter Three. This model aims to separate the antecedents or active ingredients from the mechanisms that enable hope to better understand the development of the experience. While the vast body of extant literature has allowed a deep understanding of the utility of hope, more work is needed to understand the mechanisms that facilitate the experience itself, particularly in enabling a more idiographic understanding. It is hoped that the structure of this model may stimulate the next phase of research in this direction.

CHAPTER EIGHT: OVERALL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis stories the journey towards a systems reconceptualisation of hope. It began by emphasising the need to deepen our understanding of how hope emerges for young adults to facilitate better the design of environments and interventions that enable this crucial resource. The implications of the lack of inductive methods in the development of most psychological theories of hope and the need for a more participatory approach to advance theoretical developments were also highlighted. To address these issues, the thesis first aimed to examine the development of the dominant psychological theory and the ensuing methods of study, identifying potential gaps in the meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological approaches. Secondly, the thesis aimed to compare lay to scientific theories of hope to examine the evidence supporting the central tenants of the current theoretical models and opportunities for further refinement. This chapter summarises the key findings and contributions from the four investigations designed to address these aims and the implications of this body of work. Limitations of the work are discussed with recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the contributions of the thesis.

8.1. Thesis Findings and Contributions

Two investigations were conducted to advance the first aim: identifying potential gaps in the development of the dominant psychological theory of hope. First, a peer-reviewed critically appraised topic (CAT) review examined more than 400 peer-reviewed publications studying the central tenets, correlates, and outcomes of the dominant psychological theory, Snyder's (1989) Hope Theory. This published study mapped the literature demonstrating the substantial impact of Snyder's theory through the significant growth of the research in the last three decades and the

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breadth of reach across a broad range of disciplines. However, the analysis also highlighted some of the limitations associated with the meta-theoretical assumptions that underpin Hope Theory; namely, the confines of an individualistic cognitive model. The review argued for the need to expand epistemological perspectives to enable a more integrated systems meta-theory to drive the next phase of research in hope theory. This argument supports recent calls to move towards a more complex understanding of the concepts studied within the field of positive psychology (Kern et al., 2020; Lomas et al., 2021; Wissing, 2021). A roadmap through which this could be achieved in the study of hope was outlined, an imperative contribution to progressing this broader aim of the field.

Furthermore, the findings from this study demonstrated that the extant literature had predominantly focused on demonstrating the utility of Hope Theory, but at the expense of the depth of examination of some of the core tenets of the theory. Unfortunately, the way Hope Theory has been operationalised has precluded an analysis of the dynamic interaction between the two factors – WillPower and WayPower - that were theorised to operate reciprocally and iteratively. Compounding these issues, the analysis demonstrated that quantitative methods have dominated the literature, with less than 10% of the studies using mixed-methods or qualitative designs. It evidenced the lack of inductive methods that could provide further nuance in testing the theoretical propositions of Hope Theory.

These limitations raised questions about potential gaps in theory, and I argued there might be intrapersonal and interpersonal elements that were 'left on the editing floor'. Evidence suggests a sense of purpose in one's aspirations (WhyPower) and social connectedness (WePower) are integral to consider in a dynamic systems theory

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of hope. While testing these potential theoretical factors could be achieved using methods that assess the explanatory contribution each may add to the variance in hope, my thesis instead argued for the importance of understanding the dynamic interplay between these potential elements to understand the mechanisms better. I argued that to achieve this objective, we need to broaden our methodological approaches and move away from the ‘methodolatry’ posed by the undue elevation of methods from a singular epistemology (Diener et al., 2022; Friedman, 2003).

These findings provided the impetus for the second investigation to address the first aim of the thesis: a peer-reviewed analysis of a methodology to enable investigation of the complex dynamic experience of hope. Storying methods were proposed to address some of the limitations outlined in the CAT review and heed the call to engage in more phenomenological work needed to advance the field of positive psychology (van Zyl et al., 2023). The article introduced a new methodology, Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) (Kurtz, 2014), that engages participants in the interpretive process of research and research translation. PNI had not been critically analysed in the academic literature before, and this piece contributed new knowledge on how the methodology complements and provides additional benefits to existing phenomenological methods.

Many of these benefits centre around the merits of this approach for complex dynamic investigations. For example, like other narrative methods, PNI allows experiences to be explored in context, examining some of the dynamic interactions between the individual and their environment (Creswell, 2013; McAdams & McLean, 2013). PNI also provides unique benefits as a methodology by combining participants’ real-world knowledge and experience with researchers’ expertise in facilitating

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meaning-making. Additionally, the methods deliberately and intentionally integrate different ways of knowing, supporting Fazey et al.'s (2020) arguments for more collaborative methods to advance new knowledge. Finally, the methodology includes a specific process to return insights to the community for action or further investigation, which creates the opportunity for a virtuous cycle of theory development. Such an approach is important in democratising research, which Alexandrova and Fabian (2022) contend is imperative for value-laden wellbeing concepts like hope that simultaneously describe and evaluate the experience.

However, the article also established some limitations with PNI, such as the necessity for requisite facilitation skills to lead the methodology's sense-making processes successfully. Researchers must also consider the power dynamics that may limit participatory research, ensuring they intentionally create a safe space that facilitates knowledge co-production (Calabria & Bailey, 2021). Some essential ethical considerations were also emphasised, such as the constraints on confidentiality when participants are working with stories together. Therefore, establishing trust and a sense of ethical responsibility for the data is crucial to enable the broader use of this approach in research.

Having established the merits of this new approach, I embarked on a series of empirical studies to explore the use of PNI in hope research and address the second aim of the thesis, comparing lay experiences to scientific theories to identify support or divergence from the various theories of hope. These studies combined researcher and participant analyses, providing an integrative approach to understanding how university students conceptualise and experience hope, together with their theories of how hope emerges. The researcher-derived content and thematic analyses offered

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new evidence that students predominantly conceptualise hope as an affective experience derived from thoughts and beliefs about future possibilities, differing from Snyder's cognitive conceptualisation. Such a conceptualisation was more aligned with Scioli et al.'s (2011) theory and builds upon the existing findings in young adults' lay conceptualisations of hope (Bruininks & Malle, 2005; Li et al., 2021; Luo et al., 2022). While there was alignment with some of the core aspects of Hope Theory, such as the future-focussed and motivational nature of imagining possibilities, there was less evidence of the specificity of goals and pathways thinking in the way Snyder defined them. An additional element of faith, belief, or trust was also identified in students' conceptualisations, and while this is not represented in Snyder's model, these findings contribute further empirical support for Bernardo's (2010; 2016) contention to expand Hope Theory by adding an internal-external locus of hope dimension.

The results from the lay conceptualisation study were reinforced by the participant-derived analyses of student stories of the lived experience of hope. Participants' sense-making analyses moved beyond examining some of the factors that students considered central to the experience of hope to an understanding of how they see the dynamic interplay *between* these factors leading to the experience itself. For example, students determined that social enablers inspire hope in the individual and activate their own internal resources that can elicit the ideation of potential pathways and motivational energy. Such an analysis represents a lay theory based on the experience rather than conceptualisation of the abstract idea of hope, and provides unique insights into how students explain the emergence of hope.

To the best of my knowledge, this was the first study that examined students' theories of hope, contributing a new approach to the literature. While this is not a

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grounded theory methodology, it offers important qualitative data to compare lay to scientific theories, identifying both support and new knowledge that can be integrated into theoretical developments. Such new knowledge included evidence for consideration of the dynamics between cognitions, emotions, and behaviours that elicit hope in the self as a system. Additionally, students identified influences on the self within systems. This included the significance of social support in empowering hope and the role of macro-system factors in enabling or creating barriers to developing essential elements necessary for hope to emerge. Together, these findings deliver a convergence of evidence to expand our scientific theoretical models beyond the individualistic cognitive approach that has dominated the psychological literature for the last 30 years.

The final investigation was a synthesis of findings across the research program to create a revised theoretical model of hope that expands beyond the current individual cognitive meta-theoretical framework to a dynamic systems approach. Drawing on the well-established relational development systems (RDS) metatheory (Overton, 2010, 2015), the proposed model integrated this thesis's empirical and theoretical findings into a multi-layered model. The model expanded the boundaries beyond the individual cognitive to consider the self as a system and within systems. This included a reconceptualisation of several theoretical elements in a nomological network, outlining the interdependent cognitive, affective, behavioural, and social factors that are central in eliciting the experience of hope. An additional layer acknowledged the role that environmental conditions play in enabling or creating barriers to the development of these elements.

I argued the evidence for the dynamic interplay between these elements to create four mechanisms that empower the emergence of hope. These mechanisms included a broadened definition of Snyder's WillPower and WayPower and proposed two new mechanisms: WePower and WhyPower. Distinguishing the mechanisms from the emergent experience of hope is a new way of conceptualising hope and addresses some of the challenges that have occurred from conflating the two (Tong et al., 2010). The model provides a framework that distinguishes different processes that lead to hope, enabling the design of tailored process-based interventions that have been argued as the next generation of effective intervention science (Hayes & Hofmann, 2021; Hayes et al., 2020). Notably, the approach enables a more ideographic and holistic theory of hope, addressing many limitations, including the lack of cultural diversity of the current model.

8.2. Implications for practice

The reconceptualised systems model of hope and the empirical findings from this thesis have several implications for practice. Moving beyond the constraints of a solely cognitive theory to a model that reflects the dynamic interplay between cognitive, affective, behavioural, and social elements allows the design of more effective interventions. This thesis has underscored the limited efficacy of interventions based on the dominant cognitive theory. Building a layered model, by comparison, that identifies an interconnected network of elements important to eliciting hope in the self as a system and within systems allows both multi-pronged and more tailored interventions to be trialled. Such an approach aligns with Pawelski's (2020) 'elements model' for positive psychology interventions (PPIs) and the growing

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development of process-based therapy (PBT) (Ciarrochi et al., 2021; Hayes & Hofmann, 2021; Hayes et al., 2020).

These advances have emerged in response to the limitations of the reductionistic approaches that have driven the design of interventions in psychology and psychiatry and the need for a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms and processes of change that can lead to more innovative and personalised approaches (Hayes et al., 2020; Hofmann et al., 2020; Pawelski, 2020). The idiographic nature of this model facilitates such personalisation, identifying a network of developmental elements that can work together synergistically to create a changed experience (Rusk et al., 2018). Distinguishing the mechanisms from the elements produces a cleaner model to support intervention designs by identifying the function of the interactions that enable hope to emerge. For example, a coach may conduct a person-centred analysis determining which elements may be missing or needed to elicit the relevant mechanism(s) for their client, creating a more targeted approach that focuses on the change process (Hayes et al., 2020). Of course, this does not need to be mediated by an allied professional, as self-guided processes can support students to custom design their own hope practices (Colla, 2022).

In addition to the implications for individual intervention design, the findings also evidence the need to consider how social environments can be designed to enable hope. Given the links between hope and adaptive education-related functioning, this has distinct implications in education settings. Creating enabling environments for hope to emerge can be achieved through the intentional design of curricula that consider integrating a suite of elements that enable the mechanisms of hope. I am not referring to the explicit teaching about these elements but rather how these are

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intentionally curated through curriculum design and pedagogy, creating the opportunity for a more engaging learning experience facilitated by hope (Colla et al., 2023). Colla and Mossman's (2023) Wellbeing Integrated Learning Design approach outlines a framework that supports educators in designing such an enabling environment.

Finally, the methodological findings of this thesis evidence the impact that participatory research methodologies can have in refining research experience and informing practice. Student co-researchers identified the generative benefits they experienced from participating in the research, building their knowledge of hope through their explorations while also building their critical analysis skills. They reported experiencing wellbeing and growth through this process, which can be explained by the way PNI integrates need-supportive practices in its design (Colla and Kurtz, nd). Methods that enable the co-production of knowledge, such as PNI, can also enhance research translation to practice, as we learn more about how language can be tailored to better communicate to our target audience (Conte & Davidson, 2020; Oades et al., 2021). For example, students spoke about possibilities, not pathways and willpower, rather than agency. Intentionally drawing on the language that resonates with students is one of the pathways through which we can develop wellbeing literacy, which has been suggested as an important mediator or moderator between interventions and outcomes (Hou et al., 2021; Oades et al., 2020).

8.3. Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations across this body of work warrant discussion, including recommendations for future research. Firstly, the empirical body of work was based on a small and specific cohort of university students at a top-tier university in Australia.

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While they were a culturally diverse sample, their experiences were likely shaped by the relatively privileged environment in which the study was conducted. Therefore, results should be considered as a deep analysis specific to this cohort rather than generalised findings. Further research is needed to test and iterate the proposed model over a larger number of participants and across different developmental age groups. The co-design of the website as part of the Return phase of PNI in the empirical study will help facilitate this, as I am currently seeking ethics approval to use this site to capture a more extensive and diverse sample to further this body of work.

However, in moving to larger and more diverse sample sizes, one needs to consider the scalability of the methodology. Despite the many benefits of the PNI approach, it can be time-intensive for participants, and therefore, it is imperative to consider the balance of burden to gains for participants. The small sample size may not only have resulted from the challenges associated with conducting this research during a global pandemic but also from the methodology. Designing more scalable solutions, such as using Natural Language Processing (NLP) to conduct a preliminary analysis of a large qualitative dataset that participants can work with, can streamline the sense-making process. Anecdotally, students also reported 'survey fatigue'; therefore, future research could consider more engaging ways to capture stories and facilitate participant interpretation, such as gamified storying methods. I am currently working in partnership with an interdisciplinary team to develop a proof of concept using this approach, ensuring that we consider epistemological integrity as we blend human and machine learning together.

Senge (2020) argues that there is a "natural bias within the academy to focus first on ideas and *then* to consider how they move into practice, as opposed to seeing

theory and practice as interwoven and shaping one another” (p. 57). PNI is a methodology that affords such an interweaving, using theory to guide practice and practice to refine theories based on lived experience. While this thesis provided preliminary findings on the promising benefits of such an approach, more work is needed to establish the best approach for integrating researcher and participant knowledge in the PNI methods. Evaluation research on coproduction is limited, and therefore, more research is required to establish a robust suite of evidence-based strategies to blend theory and practice together in participatory methods, particularly in integrating researcher and participant analyses (Graham et al., 2018; Pankaj & Emery, 2016).

Finally, this dissertation proposed an initial model of a reconceptualised theory, drawing together the inductive empirical findings of the lived experience of hope together with deductive theoretical findings from the literature. While this represents a first step towards a systems theory of hope, it should be noted that the structure and factor inclusions require testing. Future research can advance this work by empirically testing the clustering of elements for each EmPower to establish the best fit, including identifying any redundant elements or mechanisms. Further qualitative studies may also identify other elements that may not be included. The structure also requires additional testing, establishing how many elements are necessary and sufficient for each mechanism.

8.4. Conclusion

This body of work contributes theoretical and empirical findings to support a new meta-theoretical framework for theorising hope through a systems lens. New theoretical knowledge was established, identifying additional mechanisms that

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empower hope, as well as evidence for the dynamic interplay between elements that enable hope. These findings address the limitations of the dominant theoretical model of hope, providing impetus for the next wave of research that can enable a more nuanced and idiographic understanding of hope. These results have important implications for designing environments and interventions to facilitate hope, addressing the limited efficacy of current intervention approaches.

Throughout this dissertation I have introduced a new methodology and provided the first critical analysis of the approach in the literature, including emerging evidence of its merits in facilitating investigations of complex dynamic interactions. New empirical knowledge about how university students conceptualise hope adds to the existing literature on lay conceptualisations. Finally, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first study that has analysed lay theories of hope, making an important contribution to how we integrate lay with scientific understandings of hope and addressing the dearth of qualitative research testing the central tenets of theories of hope.

This thesis began with a story and used storying threads all the way through to bind this thesis together in a cohesive narrative. Story metaphors helped to make sense of the evolution of theories in the literature, stories of students' experiences of hope helped catalyse a reconceptualised theoretical model, and so it is only fitting that this thesis concludes with a story. But this is not my story, rather the hopes of what will be written in the next chapter of this body of work. My storying of this research was inspired by the wisdom of our indigenous cultures that (always have, always will) intrinsically know the power of story. So I finish this thesis with the wisdom of an

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Indigenous Objíway writer, Richard Wagamese, who so eloquently captures my hopes beyond this thesis:

“All that we are is story. From the moment we are born to the time we continue on our spirit journey, we are involved in the creation of the story of our time here. It is what we arrive with. It is all we leave behind. We are not the things we accumulate. We are not the things we deem important. We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we’re here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship – we change the world, one story at a time.”

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STORIES OF HOPE

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: HREC Ethics Approval



Human Ethics Application Approval

ATTENTION: PROF Lindsay Oades

226 - Melbourne Graduate School of Education
226 - Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne

Research Application

Reference Number: 2021-20781-17552-4

Project Title: Stories of hope: A participatory narrative inquiry into how hope emerges during the transition to university

Dear PROF Lindsay Oades,

Thank you for your response to queries raised by HASS 1 at a meeting held on 18th March 2021.

The Committee agreed to **approve** the application on the basis that it meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, Updated 2018). Please see overleaf, *Summary Details for the Approved Human Ethics Project* and *Conditions of Approval*. It is your responsibility to ensure that all people associated with the Project are made aware of what has been approved.

Desk-based elements of your project and face-to-face research can commence now, as can data collection that can be conducted online or via telephone, subject to necessary approvals or amendments to ethics applications.

Please consult the COVID-19 website for research guidance, FAQ and updates. <https://staff.unimelb.edu.au/covid-19-response/research-activity>

If you have any queries on these matters, or require additional information, please contact me using the details below. Please quote the ethics ID number and the title of the Project in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

MS Gemma Catley

Research Ethics Officer

Human Ethics Team

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity | Research, Innovation & Commercialisation
Level 5, Alan Gilbert Building, 161 Barry Street, Carlton
The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, Australia
T: (03) 8344 2178 E: gemma.catley@unimelb.edu.au

Summary Details for the Approved Human Ethics Project

Project Title: Stories of hope: A participatory narrative inquiry into how hope emerges during the transition to university
Reference Number: 2021-20781-17552-4
Approval Date: 14/05/2021
Expiry Date: 14/05/2024
Responsible Human Ethics Committee HASS 1
Project Supervisor PROF Lindsay Oades
Other Investigators DR Karen Williams, MRS Rachel Colla
External Investigators

Documents table:

| Document Type | File Name | Date | Version |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|---------|
| Recruitment materials | PNI study recruitment | 15/12/2020 | 1.1 |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------|-----|
| Other | PNI_study_of_hope data management plan | 17/12/2020 | 1.1 |
| Focus group questions and/or themes | PNI Survey and Focus Group details v2 | 28/02/2021 | 1.2 |
| Consent form | Student PLS - PNI study (phase 1) v2 | 02/03/2021 | 1.2 |
| Consent form | Student consent - PNI study (phase 1) v2 | 02/03/2021 | 1.2 |
| Consent form | Student PLS - PNI study (phase 2) v2 | 02/03/2021 | 1.2 |
| Consent form | Student consent - PNI study (phase 2) v2 | 02/03/2021 | 1.2 |
| Consent form | Participant PLS - PNI study (phase 3) v2 | 03/03/2021 | 1.2 |
| Consent form | Consent form - PNI study (phase 3) v2 | 03/03/2021 | 1.2 |
| Consent form | Revised consent form - PNI study (phase 1) v3 | 21/04/2021 | 1.3 |
| Consent form | Revised consent form - PNI study (phase 2) v3 | 21/04/2021 | 1.3 |
| Consent form | Revised consent form - PNI study (phase 3) v3 | 21/04/2021 | 1.3 |
| Plain Language Statement (PLS) | Revised PLS - PNI study (phase 1) v3 | 21/04/2021 | 1.3 |
| Plain Language Statement (PLS) | Revised PLS - PNI study (phase 2) v3 | 21/04/2021 | 1.3 |
| Plain Language Statement (PLS) | Revised PLS - PNI study (phase 3) v3 | 21/04/2021 | 1.3 |
| Recruitment materials | Revised PNI study recruitment v2 | 21/04/2021 | 1.2 |
| Other | Response to revisions | 21/04/2021 | 1.1 |
| Consent form | Revised consent form - PNI study (phase 1) v4 | 14/05/2021 | 1.4 |
| Consent form | Revised consent form - PNI study (phase 2) v4 | 14/05/2021 | 1.4 |
| Consent form | Revised consent form - PNI study (phase 3) v4 | 14/05/2021 | 1.4 |

Conditions of Approval:

Research projects are normally approved to the anniversary date of the approval. Projects may be renewed yearly for up to a total of three years upon receipt of a satisfactory annual report. If a project is to continue beyond three years, two optional extensions of one year each (3+1+1) will need to be applied for. Anything beyond 5 years will need a new application to be submitted.

Please note that the following conditions apply to your approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval and/or disciplinary action.

1. **Limit of Approval:** Approval is limited strictly to the research as submitted in your Project application.
2. **Variation to Project:** Any subsequent variations to the Project must be notified formally to the Committee for consideration and approval before they are implemented. If the Committee considers that the proposed changes are significant, you may be required to submit a new application.
3. **Incidents or adverse events:** Researchers must report immediately to the Committee anything that could affect the ethical acceptability of the project, including adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events. Failure to do so may result in suspension or cancellation of approval.
4. **Monitoring:** All projects are subject to monitoring at any time by the Committee.
5. **Annual Report:** An annual report must be submitted each year on the anniversary of project approval, or at the conclusion of the project if it continues for less than this time. Ethics approval will lapse if an annual report is not submitted.
6. **Auditing:** All projects are subject to audit by members of the Committee.

Appendix B: Plain Language Statements for Empirical Study

Plain Language Statement – Phase 1

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Project: Stories of hope: A participatory narrative inquiry into how hope emerges during the transition to university

Professor Lindsay Oades (supervisor)

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Dr Emily Fitzgerald (data analyst) fiej@unimelb.edu.au

Dr Kristal Spreadborough (data ethics) kristal.spreadborough@unimelb.edu.au

Ms Jennifer Henderson (research assistant) jen.henderson@unimelb.edu.au

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project. The following pages will provide you with further information about the project, so that you can decide if you would like to take part in this research.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. You may ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

Your participation is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. If you begin participating, you can also stop at any time.

What is this research about?

The aim of this project is to better understand your perceptions of what contributes to a sense of hope. We will examine your perceptions and how these relate to our current theoretical models of hope. This information will help us to understand any differences between these, which will ultimately help to update knowledge and practice that incorporates young people's perspectives into how hope emerges.

Ethics Id. 20781; Date: 24/04/24; Version: 1.5

What will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate you will be asked to complete an online survey at your convenience. You will be prompted to share a story of a time you have experienced a sense of hope in the past year, followed by a series of brief questions about this story. In total the time commitment would be 15-20 minutes. You may also be invited to participate in the second phase of this research, which involves a series of workshops, but this is not a requirement for your participation in this phase.

What are the possible benefits?

This research is expected to provide valuable insights into young people's experience of hope, particularly during transition points at university. Your contribution will help us examine how well these are represented in our existing models of hope, but also provide insights into any gaps that can improve our understanding. This will ultimately enable the design of educational practices to better facilitate hope.

We hope that you may feel empowered that your voice is being considered as experts, and that you are contributing in the ongoing development of models to support your wellbeing.

What are the possible risks?

While it is unlikely that you will experience distress as a result of participating in this research project, discussion of this topic can sometimes cause discomfort which you might not be prepared for. If this happens, please note that you can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences, including to your education (it is important to note this activity is not an assessment task and there are no right or wrong responses).

If you have any concerns, we encourage you to consider discussing them with a trusted adult, or a counselling service either at university or within your community. The university free counselling services can be accessed here: <https://services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel>

The helpline services provided below are external to the university and can also be a source of support:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Headspace</i> Headspace provides mental and health wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia. www.headspace.org.au</p> | <p><i>Lifeline</i> Lifeline Australia is a 24/7 phone counselling service. Phone: 13 11 14 Website: http://www.lifeline.org.au/</p> |
|--|--|

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. You are able to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Any non-identifiable data however cannot be withdrawn after it has been submitted, as it will be combined into group data and we would be unable to identify your individual responses to remove. Your choice to participate in this phase of the project does not necessitate participation in the next phase. It is also important to clarify that while one of the researchers is a subject co-ordinator of a breadth unit you are enrolled in (EDUC10057 – Wellbeing, Motivation and Performance), your choice to participate, or not, in this project will have no bearing on your participation and grades in this unit; including if you decide to withdraw part way through the project.

Will I hear about the results of this project?

We will be publishing a report that outlines the results and impact of this project. Should you wish to hear about this directly, please don't hesitate to contact us for a copy of this report.

What will happen to information about me?

Your responses will be anonymous and the confidentiality of the information you provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements. For example, if the information you share indicates concerns for your safety, we would be required to notify the university, in consultation with you. Your responses will not be identifiable to the subject co-ordinator of EDUC10057 and thus will not influence the assessment of your work in any way.

Should you agree to participate, we will ask you to indicate your consent electronically and include some basic details about your background; however this is separated from your responses and stored in a password protected file to ensure you cannot be identified in any of the data or publications. The group data may be presented in a report that is submitted for publication either in print or through video or audio files, but you will not be able to be identified.

All data will be stored according to the University of Melbourne's regulations in a password protected drive. The group data that is non-identifiable may be used in projects that extend beyond this research for up to 5 years. For example, in similar studies that seek to compare young people's experience of hope at different ages. Access will only be available after approval of the researchers listed here, however you can also indicate that you do not wish to make your data available for this on the consent form. All data will be destroyed 5 years after final publication of any of the group data.

Ethics Id. 20781; **Date:** 24/04/24; **Version:** 1.5

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about the project, please contact the researchers; Rachel Colla - Rachel.colla@unimelb.edu.au; or Lindsay Oades – Lindsay.oades@unimelb.edu.au

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

We thank you for your consideration and welcome you to contact us to clarify any questions you may have.

With best wishes,

Professor Lindsay Oades (supervisor)
Tel: +613 8344 5428; Email:
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Plain Language Statement – Phase 2 and 3

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Project: Stories of hope: A participatory narrative inquiry into how hope emerges during the transition to university

Professor Lindsay Oades (supervisor)

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What is this research about?

The aim of this project is to better understand your perceptions of what contributes to a sense of hope. We will examine your perceptions and how these relate to our current theoretical models of hope. This information will help us to understand any differences between these, which will ultimately help to update knowledge and practice that incorporates young people's perspectives into how hope emerges.

What will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate you will be invited to participate in three workshops of 90 minutes each. Each of these workshops will be recorded, to allow us to capture the detail of your ideas and explanations. It is not a requirement that

you can participate in all three workshops, and so if you are unable to attend one, this will have no bearing on your participation in project overall.

In the first workshop you will be invited to explore your own and other's stories of hope from the first phase of this research project. We will be examining common themes that emerge around the experience of hope across the different stories. This may involve a collaborative drawing exercise on a digital canvas.

In the second workshop, we will be exploring the factors that enable hope to emerge. This may involve a mapping exercise where you will be grouping stories from the first workshop across a digital canvas.

The final workshop will explore how to present the summation data from these workshops with representative members of the university community, such as tutors, peers, lecturers, counsellors etc. We will work together to curate some key messages that emerged from the first two workshops to share with the broader community. This data will be de-identified and will be presented at a group level. However, if there are any data that could potentially identify you by nature of the details, you are free to request this to be removed.

What are the possible benefits?

This research is expected to provide valuable insights into young people's experience of hope, particularly during transition points at university. Your contribution will help us examine how well these are represented in our existing models of hope, but also provide insights into any gaps that can improve our understanding. This will ultimately enable the design of educational practices to better facilitate hope. We hope that you may feel empowered that your voice is being considered as experts, and that you are contributing in the ongoing development of models to support your wellbeing.

What are the possible risks?

While, it is unlikely that you will experience distress as a result of participating in this research project, discussion of this topic can sometimes cause discomfort which you might not be prepared for. If this happens, please note that you can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. If you have any concerns, we encourage you to consider discussing them with a trusted adult, or a counselling service either at university or within your community. The university free counselling services can be accessed here: <https://services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel>. The helpline services provided below are external to the university and can also be a source of support:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Headspace</i> Headspace provides mental and health wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia. www.headspace.org.au</p> | <p><i>Lifeline</i> Lifeline Australia is a 24/7 phone counselling service. Phone: 13 11 14 Website: http://www.lifeline.org.au/</p> |
|--|---|

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. You are able to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Any non-identifiable data however cannot be withdrawn after it has been submitted, as it will be combined into group data and we would be unable to identify your individual responses to remove. Your choice to participate in one workshop in this project does not necessitate participation in subsequent workshops.

It is also important to clarify that while one of the researchers is a subject co-ordinator of a breadth unit you may be enrolled in (EDUC10057 – Wellbeing, Motivation and Performance), your choice to participate, or not, in this project will have no bearing on your participation and grades in this unit; including if you decide to withdraw part way through the project.

Will I hear about the results of this project?

We will be publishing a report that outlines the results and impact of this project. Should you wish to hear about this directly, please don't hesitate to contact us for a copy of this report.

What will happen to information about me?

The confidentiality of the information you provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements. For example, if the information you share indicates concerns for your safety, we would be required to notify the university, in consultation with you. It should be noted that while protocols will be put in place to set the expectation of confidentiality for all participants at the beginning of each workshop, we cannot guarantee that others will adhere to this.

Should you agree to participate, we will ask you to indicate your consent electronically and include some basic details about your background; however, this is separated from your responses and stored in a password protected file to ensure you cannot be identified in any of the data or publications. The group data may be presented in a report that is submitted for publication either in print or through video or audio files. At no time will your individual data be able to be identified without your consent.

All data will be stored according to the University of Melbourne's regulations in a password protected drive. The group data that is non-identifiable may be used in projects that extend beyond this research for up to 5 years. For example, in similar studies that seek to compare young people's experience of hope at different ages. Access will only be available after approval of the researchers listed here, however you can also indicate that you do not wish to make your data available for this on the consent form. All other data will be destroyed 5 years after publication.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about the project, please contact the researchers; Rachel Colla - Rachel.colla@unimelb.edu.au; or Lindsay Oades – Lindsay.oades@unimelb.edu.au.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

We thank you for your consideration and welcome you to contact us to clarify any questions you may have.

With best wishes,

Professor Lindsay Oades (supervisor)
Tel: +613 8344 5428; Email:
Lindsay.oades@unimelb.edu.au
<mailto:XX@unimelb.edu.au>

Ms Rachel Colla (PhD ca)
Tel: +613 9035 7888; Email:
Rachel.colla@unimelb.edu.au

Appendix C: Consent Forms for Empirical Study

Consent Form – Phase 1

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Project: *Stories of hope: A participatory narrative inquiry into how hope emerges during the transition to university*

Responsible Researcher: Professor Lindsay Oades

Additional Researchers: Ms Rachel Colla (PhD candidate), Dr Paige Williams (co-supervisor), Ms Amanda Belton (data analyst), Mr Kabir Manandhar Shrestha (data analyst), Dr Emily Fitzgerald (data analyst), Dr Kristal Spreadborough (data ethics), Ms Jennifer Henderson (research assistant)

Name of Participant: _____

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate how young people experience hope.
3. I understand that my participation in this project is for research purposes only and will not have any bearing on my participation or assessment in EDUC10057.
4. I acknowledge that the possible effects of participating in this research project have been explained to my satisfaction.
5. In this project I will be required to complete an online tasks that will take approximately 15-20 minutes in total in my own time. This will involve me:
 - Sharing a story of an experience of hope in the past year
 - Responding to a brief series of questions regarding that story, eg. rating how common this experience is on a scale of 1-10?
6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this project anytime without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data that I have provided before it is submitted.

Ethics Id. 20781; Date: 24/04/24; Version: 1.5

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Kwong Lee Dow Building, 234 Queensberry Street, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010 Australia
W: education.unimelb.edu.au | unimelb.edu.au

7. I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne and will be destroyed after 5 years after final publication. However, with my consent, group data will be available for use in similar ethically-approved research projects that extend beyond this project.

Yes No

I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements; my data will be password-protected and accessible only by the named researchers.

I understand that after I sign and return this consent form, it will be retained by the researcher.

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

If you consent to participating you can now progress to the online survey through this link - <https://tinyurl.com/hope-stories>

Consent Form – Phase 2 and 3

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Project: Stories of hope: A participatory narrative inquiry into how hope emerges during the transition to university (Phase 2)

Responsible Researcher: Professor Lindsay Oades

Additional Researchers: Ms Rachel Colla (PhD candidate), Dr Paige Williams (co-supervisor), Ms Amanda Belton (data analyst), Mr Kabir Manandhar Shrestha (data analyst), Dr Emily Fitzgerald (data analyst), Dr Kristal Spreadborough (data ethics), Ms Jennifer Henderson (research assistant)

Name of Participant: _____

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate how young people experience hope.
3. I understand that my participation in this project is for research purposes only and will not have any bearing on my participation or assessment in EDUC10057.
4. I acknowledge that the possible effects of participating in this research project have been explained to my satisfaction.
5. In this project I will be required to participate in up to three online workshops that will take approximately 90 minutes of time each. This will involve me:
 - Examining common themes that emerge around the experience of hope across different stories (workshop 1)
 - Exploring the factors that enable hope to emerge based on data from the previous workshops (workshop 2)
 - I will also be invited to a final workshop, to design how the group data will be presented to the broader community (workshop 3). I understand that I can choose for any data that could potentially identify me to be removed upon my request
6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this project anytime without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data that I have provided before it is submitted.

Ethics Id. 20781; **Date:** 24/04/24; **Version:** 1.5

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Kwong Lee Dow Building, 234 Queensberry Street, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010 Australia
W: education.unimelb.edu.au | unimelb.edu.au

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7. I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne and will be destroyed after 5 years after final publication. However, with my consent (indicated below), group data will be available for use in similar ethically-approved research projects that extend beyond this project.

Yes No

8. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements; my data will be password protected and accessible only by the named researchers. However, I am also aware that while the researchers will put in place confidentiality protocols, they cannot guarantee that other workshop participants will adhere to this.
9. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form, it will be retained by the researcher.

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix D: Story Collection Survey (Qualtrics)

- 1) How would you describe hope? Imagine that you are explaining this term to someone who has no experience of hope and answer the following question: What, in your opinion, are the key components and indicators of hope?

Free text response

- 2) Thinking about what you just described, have you experienced hope recently? This could be anywhere from the last 12 months to the last week.

Yes/No

Conditional logic: the subsequent questions only display if the response to this question is yes.

- 3) Please tell us about that experience of hope.

Free text response.

- 4) Thinking about your other experiences of hope in the past, how much hope is evident in the story you've just shared?

5-point likert scaled response (1=Not much, 2=A little, 3=A moderate amount, 4=A lot, 5=A great deal)

- 5) What or who do you think was important to enabling hope to emerge in this story?

Free text response

- 6) How memorable do you think this story of hope is for you?

5-point likert scaled response (1=Not much, 2=A little, 3=A moderate amount, 4=A lot, 5=A great deal)

- 7) What is it about this story that makes it more or less memorable for you?

Free text response.

Appendix E: PNI Sense-Making Workshop Protocols

Workshop 1: Sense-making Experience of Hope Protocol

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|---------|---|--|
| 10 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and introductions (prompt: what brought you here) • Research boundaries and completion of consent form (if not yet completed) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ https://bit.ly/SoHworkshop1 ○ Brief overview of key aspects of PLS and consent form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examining common themes that emerge around the experience of hope across different stories (workshop 1) ▪ Exploring the factors that enable hope to emerge based on data from the previous workshop (workshop 2) ▪ Invited to a final workshop, to design how the group data will be presented to a representative sample of the community (workshop 3). ▪ Possible risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ helpline ▪ confidentiality ▪ You can choose any data that could potentially identify you to be removed. ▪ Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this project anytime without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data that you have provided before it is submitted. • Check student user codes to add to padlet | Welcome. Ethical boundaries. Informed consent. |
| 10 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation of ground rules for collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intro to the power of stories and qualitative research | Create safe space for exploration. |

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|---------|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The goal of listening is to become an expert in the other person's story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ My conclusions are my current best thinking. There are possibilities I don't yet see. ▪ My position does not matter in this dialogue - we are all the same. ▪ I will silence my judgements while others tell their stories or share their insights. ▪ I can learn a lot from this story sharing and conversation ● Co-creation of ground rules for collaboration today in addition to the above expectations. The following were agreed to by the group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidentiality – ensuring that stories or any discussions are not shared beyond this workshop. ▪ Listen without judgement. ▪ Be willing to listen with open mind and heart. ▪ Appreciate different views on the same material. Knowing that this is not about me or how it relates to my experience. Rather listening to understand different perspectives. ▪ We don't need to share anything that might make us uncomfortable. We are in control of what we share. | |
| 15 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inquiry into experience of hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intro to how hope defined differently in literature and hence we are taking a grounded approach. ○ Divide story cards (including text and response to questions) between student co-researchers and have them title the story and bold any keywords (8 stories each). This is the contact process of PNI. ○ Invite groups to nominate some stories that the group may need to hear. This creates contact with stories across the | <p>Introduction to sense-making activities.</p> <p>Facilitating contact with the story data-set.</p> |

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|---------|---|---|
| | cohort and allows the group to begin to churn the story data. | |
| 5 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break | |
| 35 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry into experience of hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Thematic mapping</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review data and brainstorm themes across the story collection. Chief investigator documents theme headings on padlet. ○ Student co-researchers map their story pack to each of the themes. <i>Rich picture mapping</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overview of how to use whiteboard tool ○ Based on stories we have heard today, consider how you would represent how hope is experienced visually <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ each individual creates a rich picture mapping ▪ share rich picture with group and then add any annotations • Questions from researchers | <p>Facilitating the deconstruction, foraging, contemplation, and construction processes of the sense-making loops.</p> <p>Using arts-based methods to facilitate multi-methods to make sense of the experience of hope.</p> |
| 5 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusion and next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Negotiate timeline for next workshop | <p>Transition out, including freedom of non-participation.</p> |

Workshop 2: Sense-making What Enables Hope Protocol

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|---------|---|---|
| 10 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Welcome back ○ Reminder of our co-created ground rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The goal of listening is to become an expert in the other person's story ▪ My conclusions are my current best thinking. There are possibilities I don't yet see. ▪ My position does not matter in this dialogue - we are all the same. ▪ I will silence my judgements while others tell their stories or share their insights. ▪ I can learn a lot from this story sharing and conversation ▪ Confidentiality – ensuring that stories or any discussions are not shared beyond this workshop. ▪ Be willing to listen with open mind and heart. ▪ Appreciate different views on the same material. Knowing that this is not about me or how it relates to my experience. Rather listening to understand different perspectives. ▪ We don't need to share anything that might make us uncomfortable. We are in control of what we share. | <p>Welcome.</p> <p>Re-establishment of boundaries to create safe space for exploration and meeting of ethical requirements.</p> |
| 40 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry into enablers of hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Research highlights a variety of different factors that may enable hope, such as a belief in our abilities, or our capacity to plan pathways to achieve our goals. We are going to inquire into the factors that enabled hope in our study stories. | <p>Facilitating contact with story-set.</p> <p>Deconstruction of enablers of hope, based on storyteller's interpretation of their experience.</p> |

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|-------------|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student researchers are allocated a new pack of story cards (8 stories each) from Workshop 1. These new story cards include the titles and bolded key words, in addition to story text and answers to questions. Students are asked to use sticky notes to identify factors that enable hope in each of their stories. This process enables contact with broader story data and churning of meaning-making. ○ Discussion re key themes that emerged from the analysis. | |
| 5 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Break | |
| 45 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inquiry into system of enablers of hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intro to self as system and self within systems. We are going to map our enablers of hope on to which elements of the system they represent. ○ Overview of use of tools on Miro board. ○ Student researchers work with a new pack of story cards (8 stories), with the title of each card highlighted in different colours. This ensures throughout the sense-making process students have had contact with all stories. ○ A systems diagram has been created to represent the individual self as a system (a stick figure), and within systems (white = microsystem, grey = meso/exosystem, black = macrosystem) ○ Student researchers map the enablers of hope to the system diagram, using text entries in their title colour. They may also use pen to highlight where on the self-as-system they see this factor. Student researchers are encouraged to use connected lines to show any interactions between factors. ○ Discussion and questions re insights that emerge from this process. | <p>Foraging in story-set to identify contextual enablers of hope. Contemplation of additional context and storyteller's interpretations. Mapping enablers to construct an artefact that represents their contemplation.</p> |

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|-------------|---|---|
| 5 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conclusion and next steps<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Negotiate timeline for next workshop | Transition out, including freedom of non-participation. |

Workshop 3: Sense-making Lay Theories of Hope Protocol

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|---------|---|---|
| 10 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Welcome back ○ Intro to today's purpose: Sense-making the interconnections between factors that enable hope to emerge. Co-designing what visualisations we share to tell the story of this research. ○ Reminder of our co-created ground rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The goal of listening is to become an expert in the other person's story ▪ My conclusions are my current best thinking. There are possibilities I don't yet see. ▪ My position does not matter in this dialogue - we are all the same. ▪ I will silence my judgements while others tell their stories or share their insights. ▪ I can learn a lot from this story sharing and conversation ▪ Confidentiality – ensuring that stories or any discussions are not shared beyond this workshop. ▪ Be willing to listen with an open mind and heart. ▪ Appreciate different views on the same material. Knowing that this is not about me or how it relates to my experience. Rather listening to understand different perspectives. ▪ We don't need to share anything that might make us uncomfortable. We are in control of what we share. | <p>Welcome.</p> <p>Re-establishment of boundaries to create safe space for exploration and meeting of ethical requirements.</p> |
| 40 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of sense-making from previous workshops | <p>Contact with previous insights from studies 1a to 1c. Inviting</p> |

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|-------------|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intro to creating a rich picture map that depicts how hope emerges for university students. ○ Invite students to take notes as we share PowerPoint slideshow with data visualisations from Study 1a to 1c. ○ Discussion on representation, including ideas to communicate this to broader to community | <p>students to revisit key themes, and contemplate trustworthiness of representation. Also designed to prepare students to begin the foraging loop to create a rich picture map that represents their lay theory of hope.</p> |
| 5 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Break | |
| 40 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creation of rich picture systems map <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review story pack to ground ideas in the stories of hope. ○ Create individual rich picture maps to articulate how hope emerges for university students. ○ Each student shares map, narrating their theory of how hope emerges. ○ Group discussion to contemplate the similarities and differences, as well as any questions that emerged. | <p>Contact with story-set, ensuring that student co-researcher have worked deeply with each story-set throughout the sense-making workshops. Foraging in story-set to ground ideas in the data, including contemplation of interplay between factors. Construction of a systems diagram to represent their lay theory of hope. Use of multi-methods to enable access to different ways of knowing and expressing.</p> |
| 10 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review data visualisations and invite students to caption each data visualisation – | <p>Student co-researchers</p> |

| Time | Activity | Purpose |
|-------------|---|--|
| | what is the core message you want to share with broader community | design how to communicate insights in the return phase of PNI. |
| 15 mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project wrap-up and celebration | Transition out, including freedom of non-participation. |